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["LOB, SIR, I AIN'T BEEN HERE SIX MONTHS!" THE WOMAN SAID, IN ANSWER TO ERLSCOURT'S QUESTION!]

THE EYES OF THE PICTURE.

CHAPTER XV.

It was Erlscourt's intention to go into Wales as soon as he could spare the time, which would not be just yet. The delay was not of very great moment, as it was hardly likely that he would be able to discover anything there, having no knowledge of the place, or even the direction where it lay. Seeing Violet the day after his taking Dora to the Prince's Theatre, he got from her further particulars than either had been able to think about previously.

"What I mean to do at once," he said, "is to try and trace Marsden from this house in Blackfriars. I want the street and number; any particulars you can think of that would help me to identify him to others, and of course a description or photograph, if you have one. If it were he I saw in the Haymarket the night I was there, I did not see him enough to give a description."

"I have none," she said. "I can give you a description as he was seven years ago, but not only may he have changed, but he might be disguised."

"Never mind that; of course in that case the task will be more difficult."

Violet gave him a minute description, recalling traits and habits which would be of use as a means of identification, doing it with manifest repugnance, but answering clearly and readily his close cross-questioning. It all brought back the past so vividly—the past that seemed doubly sordid and stained by contrast with the present, as if that and this were different worlds, and different beings lived in them.

It seemed so useless, too. How trace a man who in these seven years had probably gone through twice that number of aliases? She said as much.

"I know," Erlscourt answered, "it is the slenderest chance; but I must not leave anything undone. Now the address, Violet."

She went to her davenport for pencil and paper, pausing when a few steps away, and looking back in the faint hope that he would

see her hesitation and yield to it. Her hand shook as she wrote the name of the mean street, her cheek burned and her eyes sank as she gave him the paper. He took it without a word, without any change of face that she could see.

"Don't go," she ventured to say, "I can't bear for you to come face to face with all that squalor, that degradation, and your work that must not be stopped. Oh, if you would let it alone!"

"Violet," said Erlscourt, looking down into the troubled young face, "you cannot misjudge me, or even misunderstand me. All you have borne only makes you the dearer, and my powerlessness the more intolerable. No outward degradation can touch you. All that belongs—well I have sullied my lips and your ears enough with the name, and I cannot say it again. Good bye, dearest."

And yet, though he would not utter one word of all that had surged in his heart at the sight of that address, she knew it, and he knew she did, as well as if he had spoken.

He scarcely saw the way before him the first few paces after he left her house, and the

storm only gathered force while he worked alone the rest of the day. If Edgar Marsden had stood before him then in bodily presence, he knew he should have hurled aside every earthly consideration, every thought of consequences, and struck him dead at his feet. Let come what might then, the vengeance would have been wrought.

The feeling only deepened when late in the evening he turned out of Ludgate-circus down the Blackfriars-road, and crossing it, left further and further behind him all life that is worth the living. He had been in such places often before, wandered into the lowest haunts in Continental and Eastern cities; but they had never struck him with the sickening repulsion this street in Blackfriars did. Violet lived here! Violet, with her refinement, her gentle breeding, her purity of nature. His Violet, whom he would surround with all fair and sweet things. Could it be the right place? It seemed impossible to imagine her here.

A narrow, dingy street, where many houses preferred paper to glass, where doors stood open in the summer evening showing dirty passages within,—a little shop here, a public-house over the way,—about him low types of face, even in the children who sprawled almost under his feet.

He felt as if the thick, hot air must choke him.

His heart sank at every step, dreading to find the house he sought worse than those he had passed.

Of course, he attracted notice, although it was dark, and he had taken care to adopt as much disguise as could be produced by a wrap coat and a wide-brimmed hat he had been used to wear in Italy.

But no disguise he could have worn could have hidden a carriage and walk not much seen in Penfold-rents; nor could he hide a quality of voice also rare in that district, when he found it necessary to address a lady taking the air on her doorstep.

Seven years having passed since there had been a number on many of the houses, it followed that those houses were difficult to find. And No. 18 was amongst them.

"Eighteen, sir?" said the dame in question, giving the title instinctively. "That there 'ouse over there is eighteen, but it ain't 'ad no number on it for a good time." Erlsourt thanked her, and crossed to No. 18.

Here a curly-haired child screamed out,—

"Mother, here's a gentleman wants yer!" But when the landlady appeared Erlsourt received a check at once. When he asked if a Mr. Marsden had lived here, as he wanted him on business, she shook her head and looked puzzled.

"I think he lodged here about seven years ago," explained Erlsourt.

"Lor, sir, I ain't been 'ere but six months," said she, rather amused at the idea of such a long sojourn as seven years. "I don't know anyone in the street as 'ud know—leastways, they might at the shop round the corner."

The "shop round the corner" proved to be a pawnbroker's.

The master was slightly above the surrounding inhabitants, but that was no gain, for though he had been there for eight years, he couldn't recall either the name or recognise a description.

"No; he didn't know no such person." Erlsourt forced himself to say that the Mr. Marsden he wanted had a young wife—a girl with fair hair, brown-eyed.

It seemed to him sacrilege to even mention Violet there, and in connection with the man who had been her curse.

And he might have spared himself, for the pawnbroker "Never hadn't seen no such a gal!" a speech which so jarred on the visitor that he was glad to get out of the shop.

The police-station was not to be thought of. There was no knowing what a man of Marsden's stamp might have done that would make the police as eager to be in his track as Erlsourt was.

The owner of No. 18, he found from the landlord of the public-house, was a public body.

The house was, of course, subtlet as deeply as it could be, and the man who had leased it in the first place, seven years ago, was now dead.

"You see, sir," the landlord said, "it ain't possible to find out people who's lived here less time than a month ago. They flits no end. If this gentleman was a friend o' yours"—a friend! Erlsourt winced—"I'm afraid you won't track him from this 'ere place."

"I'm afraid not," said the painter; and leaving Penfold-rents came out again into the ceaseless stream that flows over Blackfriars Bridge seemingly at almost all hours.

There lay the river, broad and dark; there flashed the lights all up its banks; far off the stately towers of Westminster, as if they closed in the river. Erlsourt crossed the road and leant over the bridge, unheeding the crowds sweeping on behind him, not one of whom, perhaps, hard and barren though their lives might be, carried a heavier heart than he.

Yet the glamour of the night, heightening into beauty the scene before him, had its power too over this restless, questioning, tempted heart; till a sudden wave of memory rushed over him, and he turned away, not down the Embankment, he could not pass there to-night, but into Fleet street, whose noisy throbbing life was calmed down at this hour.

He saw now as he had not seen before what his vow was to cost him, what temptation would dog him at every step, not alone the palpable temptation belonging to the very position between Violet and himself, but a more subtle temptation.

What if he came to seek the truth less for her sake than his own; less to prove her honour unsoiled than to prove her free for him to win?

That would be to him a stain, and yet how hard to detect the falling away until it had come to pass. Yet, although he saw all the dangers, he did not shrink from the task, nor regret that he had undertaken it, for the briefest second.

When the light was fading the next evening, he put aside work and left the house, intending to go and tell Violet what he had been attempting.

As he came into the park from the Gardens he saw her herself walking slowly before him. To overtake her was the work of a minute. She looked up as the light step came close to her, evidently recognising it, turned and stopped with a flush of pleasure.

"I was coming to you," Erlsourt said, still holding her hand, there was no one near. "Are you tired?"

"No. I came out because the evening was fine, and it tempted me. Why do you ask?"

"Turn back with me under the trees and I will tell you what I have done, or rather not done."

She turned back silently, and when they had gained that belt of trees bordering the Long Water, Erlsourt said,—

"I went to Blackfriars, Violet, and failed."

"I knew you would," she said; but she drew in her breath a little.

"Will you hear details?" Erlsourt asked, gently.

"No." There was an involuntary shiver. "I know you tried your utmost; what do the details matter?"

"I have not quite given up that point, though. Did you tell me the name of the village where your school was?"

"It was Melton in Herefordshire. What are you going to do?" she asked, anxiously. "It will be only waste of time to go to Wales."

"I shall go, nevertheless, when I am a little more free. After all, there is a certain radius within which the place we want must be; and there would be the church register. Remember churches in Wales are not as numerous as in England."

Violet was silent. She knew the uselessness of objection. Presently she said abruptly,—

"Well, let that be. Talk of something else. I want to hear about the Bond-street Exhibition. Are you ready for it?"

"I am going to send my pictures off next week; you know it is not confined to my doings, though."

"I know; I shall come and see them."

"Why, yes, of course," said Erlsourt. "I must have your verdict, though you have seen some of them. Why are you turning?" for she had made as if to retrace her steps.

"I ought to be going, it is getting late," she said.

"Ah, stay a little longer," said Erlsourt, in his softest tone. "How often do I see you, and alone? I thought I should see you to-night in a room full of people, and perhaps five minutes alone afterwards. I never looked for this happiness."

She yielded, as any woman must, for she was happy too, dark though the present was, and the future she dared not look at. But for the time, to be at his side, her hand in his, to hear his voice, to feel all around her the atmosphere of love and reverence, to be cherished, was infinitely satisfying and soothing to her who, in her bitterness of soul, had almost learned to look on herself as cast out from womanhood.

She let the time slip by, listening rather than talking herself, while they passed slowly under the trees. The solemnity of night had fallen; the air was hushed, the leaves motionless, only the twitter of a bird now and then; the distant voices, the thousand noises of the great city, hardly heard.

"Oh," Violet said, breaking a long pause, "what people miss who never see the night! How lovely it is—how ineffably peaceful!"

"And yet you end it," said Erlsourt, as she moved to go. "Are there too many moments like this in any life that they need be broken off? Must you go?"

"Don't tempt me," said Violet, "I ought to go."

"I will not gainsey you, love, but," he added, as they went on, "when shall I see you again?"

"I don't know."

Something in the tone, in the half-averted face, sent a chill through him. He bent down.

"Violet, what do you mean? Are you going to banish me—to tell me at least I must see you less often?"

"It would be better—wiser," said Violet, indistinctly.

He knew that but the wisdom of the course only made it more intolerable.

"Perhaps," he said, "but I can't have it so. Don't make it so terribly hard, Violet."

"I am hard on myself," she whispered. "It is best."

Erlsourt was silent, biting his lip. To a woman whose past had not a suspicion of blame he could have raised a thousand pleas; but to her—how could he press on her what might make the relations between them more strained and dangerous?

"It is all we have," he said, at last, "all we may ever have."

She did not say a word; her strength against him always lay in her weakness, and perhaps she instinctively felt that she had known so little love that to love she could only oppose a passive resistance, and the pain of even that resistance dimmed her eyes with tears.

"But what restrictions?" Erlsourt said.

"How often? I cannot live so, Violet. If you can bear it, I cannot!"

She lifted her large brown eyes, softened and glittering with those unshed tears, a look so unconsciously eloquent that it went to his heart with a pang of shame and remorse.

"Oh, Violet," he said, "what am I worth after all? It is not harder for me than for you. What you can bear, cannot I? Have I brought these tears, my darling? Heaven

forgive me! I thought never to make you shed one!"

"It is not your fault. I am foolish, I cannot stand anything," said Violet, brokenly, "at least, not from you."

Instead of taking advantage of that confession he answered,—

"The less need I have tried you then. I will not do it again. But I can't set the limits of my obedience; you must do that."

She met the brighter look and tone with a smile.

"Oh no, I trust that to you."

Which answer touched him enough to make him silent for some little way.

"I trust you," on such a point, too, where all his nature and his passionate love for her would have led him the other way.

If Violet had used the words by design she could not have chosen a more perfect method of binding him to her will; but she had not spoken by design. The words had been the spontaneous expression of her boundless faith, and he felt he could have died sooner than betray that faith.

But as usual, the woman suffered the most, not because the man loved less, but because he was on his honour, and for the time all things seemed possible to him, but the woman, who was not on her honour, who had banished him, wept bitter tears at her own fiat.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE exhibition of Leigh Erlscourt's pictures was opened, and all the world flocked to see them, led thereto by the artist's rising fame and the enthusiastic praises of all the papers, not one of which failed to notice the picture called "Forsaken." It had been with some reluctance that Erlscourt had let that go for exhibition, but the arrangements had been made before Violet Herbert saw it, and he could not draw back. But he absolutely refused to sell it, declining two good offers that were made on the first day it was seen in public. Greville remonstrated vigorously. It was folly, he said; all very well for a wealthy man of assured position, but for a man struggling upwards, to refuse so much money, and perhaps offend influential people; poor Greville more nearly lost patience with Leigh than he had ever done in his life before. But it was such a generous anger that Leigh could not be vexed. He only wished that for the moment Greville had been a woman.

"It's always the way," concluded Greville. "The people who don't care for them always get the chances. But you know, old fellow, though you are a genius, genius won't carry the world by storm. It never has. You'll wake to-morrow with heaps of enemies all jealous of you. Artists are a confoundedly jealous lot, who'll just slip into the good graces of these rich buyers you are flouting."

"I'm sure I don't mind," said Erlscourt, with, it must be confessed, a rather aggravating laziness. "I wish you were Dora."

"Why?"

"Because she would know that I had a good reason for what you call my folly."

This remark did not mollify Greville, who was inclined to be a little sore on his friend's privileged relations with Dora. Being so sore he was of course rather wrong-headed, and chose to imagine that Leigh was thinking of some special rapport between himself and Dora. Erlscourt saw now he might be misinterpreted the minute he had spoken, and added,—

"Women are so quick, they spare one a lot of explanation."

"Well, I'm not a woman," growled Greville.

"No," said the other, so quickly that Greville's sense of the ridiculous was touched, and he burst out laughing.

"Well, go your own way, Leigh, I can't quarrel with you, but I can't make you out."

Which was exactly what Erlscourt wished. He was conscious in what light his real reason would appear to Greville, who would think as

nine sensible people out of ten would, that Erlscourt was anything but sensible.

Escaping congratulations and praise, Erlscourt left London for the far off Herefordshire village. He spent ten days in visiting all the churches he could find within a certain radius, being ostensibly on a sketching expedition; but his search was so fruitless that he was forced to think he had either missed the particular church or that the marriage, even if legal, had not been inserted in the register. No where could he find either a trace of the marriage in a cottage room.

Baffled, he came back to London. He had not the time, he decided, for such search. He considered the advisability of doing what Violet had shrunk from—employing a detective to assist him. It was all very well for her, alone and unprotected, to fear putting on her track a man like Edgar Marsden; but now the case was changed, Marsden would have to reckon with himself (Erlscourt). Another question, and one which is sure to crop up in all cases, was the monetary one.

Violet would never endure that he should pay a sixpence towards the large expenses of a detective, and her own means did not suffice to defray it. So, uncertain, not seeing his way clearly, the painter came home, to find scores of invitations, for which he had little heart, and several commissions.

There was no doubt about accepting these last, and the invitations had also to be accepted as far as he had time. No man gets on without friends, he was very well aware. But he made time for a hurried visit to Vane-street—a letter would not do, it was not right. He did not suggest a detective, he simply told Violet, he had not yet settled on any plan. She, seeing he was harassed, put the subject aside when she had heard all he had to say, and for the short time he was with her, talked brightly of other matters. She had been to see his pictures, and she dismissed them, and through all was so plainly proud of his success, so rejoicing in his triumph.

It was worth all the praise of the world. A note from Dora, slipshod, scrawled, and imperative, awaited him when he got home.

"You've got an invitation to the Danby's dance," she wrote, "and you are to accept it. I've got the loveliest new dress, that I know you'll admire, and I've kept some dances for you."

He laughed.

"What a little autocrat! That was one of the very places I had meant not to go to. Emmie's friends are apt to be dull, but I suppose Mentor won't like it if I don't go, and, besides, I must obey Dora."

So he went; he thought of it afterwards, how curiously the great events of our lives hang on trivialities; how nearly he had been refusing this invitation.

The Danbys were rich people. Danby père was a brother barrister of Arthur Challoner's in big parliamentary practice. Mrs. Danby had been the daughter of a wealthy solicitor, and had brought plenty of money with her when she left her maiden home.

She was delighted to see the painter enter her rooms. She liked somebodies, and he promised to be a somebody. She administered a slight scolding for being late, however, and then accepted graciously his apologies.

"I daresay you had plenty to do, just coming back to town," she said, and then Erlscourt said he saw her daughter sitting down, and he was going to try his chance with her.

He did not see Dora till later in the evening; she gave him a nod as she swept past him, and said to her partner, who for the second time, was Greville, "Leigh didn't dare disobey me, he's here. Oh, I'm tired; let's get out this dance."

Nothing loth, Greville dexterously piloted her out of the maze, and away into the next room, which was used for promenading.

"You'll be cooler here," he said, placing her in a fauteuil, and himself beside her.

"Yes," said Dora, fanning herself.

There ensued a little pause. There were a few other couples sitting down or walking about, not enough to spoil semi-privacy. Dora probably found the position and the silence slightly embarrassing, for she said,—

"I shall have to go back presently. I kept some dances for Leigh."

"Is that why you will only promise me three?"

"Three is a very good number. I made him come, you know."

"Well, if he wants you he can come and look for you," said Greville. "Tell me now if I am to see so little of you as I have lately."

"I don't know—I can't help it. I suppose we go to different places," said Dora.

"We have been at the same places, and somehow there is always some one with you. If I speak to you for a minute Mrs. Challoner is sure to call you away, or to send me for something. You ought to give me a fourth dance to console me."

"Four dances! oh, I can't."

But with a pleading look in his face he had taken her card. Dora put her little gloved hand on his.

"Please let me have it," she said.

How could she expect him to give it up while she kept her hand on his, while she looked at him with that half shy glance that would entreat more, if it dared?

"Just one," he said, putting "M. G." against a waltz; "so little to you, so much to me."

Her colour rose, her hand fell.

"Am I too bold?" Greville whispered.

"No," said the girl, with her pretty face rippling into a smile; and there is no knowing what more he might have said had not a shadow crossed them, and a tall man bowed as he passed and said, "How do, Greville?" bestowing a somewhat bold look on Dora.

"Who is he?" she said.

"His name is Venner. I know him slightly. The dance is over—the room is filling," said Greville.

"And here comes Leigh," exclaimed Dora, springing up.

"My dear Dora," said Erlscourt, taking the girl's hand, with a quick glance from one to the other. "Greville, I've seen you once already to day. I won't rob you. I'll come later for my dances, Dora."

"You got my note?" said she, "I was so afraid you would not come."

"So you bribed me with dances and the sight of some wonderful robe?"

"Do you like it?" said she.

She was quite ignorant how she was hurting poor Greville, who stood by, and thought that she had not said a word to him about her dress, and that she need not have sent that note to Leigh to make him come, and be so glad when she saw him.

Had she anything to do with that nonsense about the picture? She had praised it; it was her favourite. The unbidden conjecture rushed into his mind, and yet he hated himself for it.

"There's that horrid creature again!" said Dora, suddenly.

She was standing nearest to Erlscourt; she put her hand on his arm, and Greville, seeing the action, in a sort of pique stopped towards Venner as he was going by, and stopped him.

"How long have you been here, Venner?" said he. "I didn't know you knew the Danbys."

"I daresay there are a good many things you don't know," said Venner, laughing, as he shook hands. "Glad to see you. Capital dance, isn't it? Don't let me keep you from your friends."

"I'll introduce you if you like," said Greville. He had not meant to go quite so far in his pique against Dora, and the minute he had made the proposal he was afraid of what she would say to him; but Venner's remark left him little choice.

"Miss Maine," he said, "may I introduce Mr. Venner to you? Mr. Venner, Mr. Erlscourt."

Dora bowed a little stiffly, with an indignant

glances from behind her fan at Greville. Erlscourt acknowledged the introduction with no particular thought in his mind except that he did not like the man's face and should not cultivate the acquaintance.

"I suppose your card is full, Miss Maine?" said Venner.

It was not, and the young lady scored another point against poor Greville. She could not plead fatigue in a prophetic spirit, so she allowed Venner to put his initials against a *sohottische*.

"I suppose," said Venner, turning to Erlscourt, "that you are almost tired of congratulations on the stir your pictures are making? I heard you were here to night, but did not expect to have the pleasure of meeting you."

Erlscourt bowed. In truth, he was tired of the set phrases on both sides.

"Do you care for pictures?" asked Greville.

"I am ashamed to say, in present society," answered Venner, "that my tastes are not artistic. Still, I hear so much about this exhibition and particularly one picture, I forget the name, that I shall go and see if I have in me any spark of the divine fire, even though it burns only internally."

"The end will be," said Erlscourt, laughing, "that you will be infinitely bored and turn indifference into hate. I don't advise anybody to look at pictures who doesn't care at all for art. Now, Dora, there's the band, and this is my dance."

"Do you like that Mr. Venner?" said Dora, as she and her cavalier went into the other room. "I don't."

"Not particularly. He need not have told us he is not artistic. I knew that the minute I saw him."

"I don't like his face at all," repeated Dora, "and I wish I had had all my card filled. Do you mind when you have your next dance?"

"Not if it isn't too long before I get it, and it must be a waltz; you waltz better than any one else."

"Not too long and a waltz. Then please have the one before supper."

They were now amongst the dancers. Erlscourt said,—

"Of course, I should prefer that, but I can't out friendship, and I know by experience when you mean mischief."

Dora laughed and coloured, but she did not speak.

"What has Greville done?" asked Leigh, bending down to her a little, half smiling.

"You always find out everything," said Dora, in pettish vexation. "I didn't think you could be so unkind!"

Seeing she was really annoyed, he said not a word.

He would have liked to laugh, but would not have hurt her for the world, and Dora finished the dance without opening her lips.

Her vexation had cooled down, but she did not choose to show that it had.

Leigh had presumed a little too much, and he must not be pardoned too easily.

Nevertheless, as he would not have the dance before supper, she did not know but that Mr. Greville might as well have it, and it would be a good opportunity to lecture him.

Meanwhile, Erlscourt did not give her the chance of forgiving him.

He handed her back to his sister and left her.

This made Dora angry again, for she was certainly a little spoilt of late; and Greville's chances for that favourite dance before supper might have been spoiled had not Mrs. Challoner said she hoped Dora would be careful how she arranged her card.

Dora knew at whom this was levelled, and when Greville came up and begged for that dance she was a little more gracious than she had originally meant to be.

As the waltz went on she began to get very sorry that she had been angry with anybody, so that when Greville said softly,—

"Are you still angry with me?" all her pre-

meditated rebuke was swept away, and she just looked up and shook her head.

She could never tell him, of course, how nearly he had lost that dance that she had guarded for him half the evening. She hoped, nay, she was sure Leigh would not. But if any one was happy that night it was Dora. All the Cousin Emilys in the world could not dim her delight. Even the dance with the objectionable Mr. Venner was endured.

Perhaps the person whom Dora's pleasure pleased least was Emily.

She had done all she could to throw the girl in Leigh's way, to put her under his care whenever possible.

Equally had she checked any informal visiting from Greville, and, indeed, almost snubbed him.

In her paramount desire to draw her brother away from a dangerous friendship she forgot the part Dora's heart might play.

She could scarcely imagine that any girl could prefer somebody else to Leigh; and, indeed, any apparent inclinations of Dora's in another direction she considered mere girlish flirting.

But to-night she was seriously disturbed, for Dora got her own way, and Leigh seemed to aid and abet her.

Their brother and sister ways were a stumbling block in her way, but she had at last an inkling that to pit her will against her brother's generally led to defeat.

But she was not unjust enough to be cross to Dora. Her head, not her heart, was wrong. And, after all, there was some excuse for her.

Without children, with a house like clock-work, servants like machines, unvarying hours, and nothing to do, who would have grudged her a little scheming to fill up the empty hours?

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. GILBERT VANNER had his own reasons for being very well satisfied with the party at Mrs. Danby's. Mrs. Danby would probably not have been so satisfied with her guest had she overheard some conversation that followed that same night in a room in King's Club.

The worthy proprietor of that all-night establishment was smoking in one chair, and Gilbert Venner, still wearing his wrap coat over his evening dress, lounged in another, also smoking.

"Yes," he said, evidently continuing a conversation, "I hope to have done a good night's work. Greville will, I think, be right enough in time; comes here a little more often than he did."

"Slow and sure, I suppose," said King, "but at the rate he goes on it isn't worth the trouble. And he hasn't money enough—a poor artist!"

"He's not poor—he has some private means. No, he doesn't give us much encouragement, but still I have hopes of him. Play, George, is like wine, it gets a gradual hold, and once the hold is got the will to escape is gone."

"He didn't strike me as that sort of fellow," said George, "and I don't fancy affects you, Venner. Seems to me he is no good."

By which Mr. King did not at all mean to imply that Greville's morals were deficient.

"I like doing things on the Jews' principle," began Venner, when George interrupted him sharply,—

"The Jews get quick profits—that's their principle."

Venner's heavy brows frowned.

"If you are dissatisfied so—" he said, coldly.

"Oh dear no—not at all," replied King, who had not meant to give offence. "You're so touchy sometimes. Who is this other fellow you've met?"

"The painter, Erlscourt. He's a friend of Greville's—school mates and that sort of thing, so that if one comes the other may. At any rate I've been introduced and can ripen

the acquaintance. I know how to take people," said Venner, laughing complacently. "The man is considered a genius, and no doubt thinks himself one. What did I do? Why, professed interest in his pictures; said I should go and see them. Of course he'll be flattered, and respond to my advances."

"Has he got any money?" said George.

"I don't know what he has got besides what he earns; but let me tell you, if you don't know it, that a successful painter now-a-days is not to be despised. He has no drawbacks; he is not married, and has no near relations but this sister, Mrs. Challoner, a great deal older than himself."

"Young men are not generally so particular to follow the advice of middle-aged sisters. And, by the bye, George, take care that you don't admit just anybody. Erlscourt has the reputation of being slightly fastidious. He's of very good family, and won't associate with everybody."

"A painter fellow, with no money, to give himself such airs!" said George, vulgarly.

"I should like to know how he's any better than Wilson, who's one of the biggest fishes on the Stock Exchange."

There was enough of the gentleman left in Venner, in spite of the sort of life that will blacken the bluest blood, to make him sneer at this essentially plebeian remark.

"Pooh!" said he, with exasperating contempt. "What's the good of explaining the difference to you? Wilson's a cad with all his gold, and the other would even beg like a gentleman."

"Oh, you're a gentleman yourself, of course, Mr. Venner," said George, with a pitiful attempt to be scornful, which persons of his condition never can be.

"Of course I am," returned Venner, eyeing him steadily, "and I'd like to know how you'd get on if I were not?"

King's eyes shifted uneasily from the other's gaze. It was his last desire to seriously quarrel with Venner, and he was rather afraid that the gentleman blood he affected to despise might be stronger than self-interest.

"Oh, devil take it!" he said, with an awkward laugh, "you take things as if they were always meant. You're a ticklish one to deal with."

Venner did not condescend to answer this. Perhaps the refused atmosphere he had just left had made him more than usually conscious of the coarseness of his associate. Yet, after all, his polish was but the thinnest veneer.

George King was not a refined specimen of humanity, but there were some things he would not have done that Venner had not shrunk from.

Venner got up after a few minutes of silent puffing at his expiring cigar.

"Going?" asked King.

"Yes! Good night. See you to-morrow. We're all right still?"

"Quite!" was George's response to this mysterious remark.

Venner nodded, and went, not towards the principal entrance to the room, but to a small door that led into another chamber and down a back passage to an entry below, and door giving on the street.

It was some days before Venner actually went to Bond-street. It was to him a task, and not an agreeable one.

He would much rather have sat at the card-table, or been betting at Newmarket. Besides, agreeably to his estimate of Erlscourt, which he thought so shrewd—and which would have been if it hadn't happened to be wrong—he wanted the painter to be aware that he had been honoured by Venner's attendance.

To that end Gilbert indited a note to Morton Greville, asking him to take pity on his ignorance and go with him to the gallery.

Greville was annoyed by this note. He threw it across to Erlscourt, who was with him, with a "Dance take it!"

"I didn't know you knew the man so much," said the other, reading the note. "What did you pick him up?"

"Oh, at King's. I've been there two or three times."

"Yes, I know."

"He's a capital card player," said Greville; "and I'm rather fond of cards. That's all that's made me go."

"My dear fellow," said Erlscount, "I'm not my sister, am I?"

"Oh, but you hate those sort of clubs so—and I don't like them. You see what it leads to."

"I might preach a sermon on the disasters resulting," said Leigh, gravely. "Venner is not a cad, however, though I am much mistaken if he isn't a *roué*. Are you going?"

"I had meant to go myself, and it's the only day I can manage this week; so, unfortunately, I am in a fix. By the bye, wasn't Thursday the day you were going to see the man at the gallery—what's his name—Foskett?"

"Yes. Do you want me to help you to endure Venner?"

"Be a good fellow, and come upstairs. I'll tell Venner you're going to call for me, and it will shorten my martyrdom. He knows no more of art than that chair there," giving the article in question a shove that sent it sprawling; "and he'll drive me frantic!"

"I shall have done with Foskett about four," said Erlscount. "I'll come for you then, if that will do?"

"First-rate. I am your eternal debtor!"

But when that Thursday was over, Erlscount thought he was the debtor.

"How do?" said Venner, his usual greeting, as he met Greville on the Thursday a little after three in the entry of the Bond-street gallery.

Greville always found it hard to be cool to a man unless he positively hated him.

His feelings towards Venner were not of that pronounced type, so he responded to the greeting with a sufficient amount of cordiality which, no doubt, on other occasions had deceived Venner unconsciously.

"Sorry I can't be with you long," said he, with an admirable air of *raisonné*. "Erlscount is to call for me at about four; but I daresay an hour is as much as you will manage among pictures. We'd better begin at No. 1."

Here he paused before a lovely Italian head.

"That's one of the most exquisite heads I've ever seen. The colouring is wonderful!" and Greville went off into a rhapsody of technical terms, pulling himself up suddenly with a profound apology, at the same time passing his hand over his mouth suspiciously.

"Pray forgive my enthusiasm," said he; "of course I am talking Greek," and indeed Venner stood before the picture with a mystified expression. "It is very pretty," he said, passing on to the next.

There is something calculated to try the most saintlike Christianity in going through a gallery of fine pictures with an unappreciative companion. Greville did not pretend to such heights, and suffered doubly. Though the room was full, there was not a soul in it he knew; he felt like a man on a desert island, and Erlscount was the ship that was to come and rescue him. The hour dragged slowly.

"Suppose we change," said Greville, about half-past three; "we've finished one side, shall we go and see Headison's Norwegian landscape in the other room, and come back down the other side of this?"

Venner caught at this—he was bored to death. He could not see what Greville found to admire so intensely. Erlscount was pre-eminently a figure painter, and he chose his subjects after a different fashion from many of his compeers.

They were above and beyond Venner, who, could understand them hardly at all. Even the sea-pieces, of which there were some, and a few paintings of the magnificent Indian scenery, he could not see far into. Everything was "very pretty," not because he

thought so, but because it seemed the right thing to say.

When they came back into the first room, quite a little crowd of people were collected before a picture hanging not far from the door of entrance.

"What are they all looking at?" asked Venner.

"The favourite picture, 'Forsaken,'" said Greville. "I expect that's the one you spoke of the other night but couldn't remember the name. We shall get to it in a few minutes."

They joined the crowd, and by dint of patient waiting and dexterous insertion of themselves into every gap left, drew nearer and nearer to the picture.

"There's Erlscount," said Greville, suddenly looking towards the doorway, and then he nodded, with a glance at the thick knot of people as much as to say, "Wait for me I can't get through this yet."

Erlscount nodded back and stood leaning against the lintel, looking down from the vantage point the step gave him on the people pressing forward.

"Here we are in port at last," said Greville, with a breath of relief. "Jove! how people push! Here's the picture, Venner. Heavens! how beautiful it is!"

"Is this 'Forsaken'?" said Venner, leaning over the rail. He drew back suddenly, with a start and scarcely breathed "Ah!"

"What's the matter?" said Greville, "you look startled."

"It's very beautiful," said Venner, a shade paler than he had been, and looking, not at the picture as a whole, but at the face of the girl.

"You've paid a great compliment to the painter," said Greville, and instinctively his gaze went to the doorway again.

The brown eyes he sought were not looking at him at all, but at the man beside him, with a something in them—momentary—a flash—of what he could not tell, that made Greville hold his breath, till the eyes came back to his with a smile.

Startled—puzzled, Greville turned to Venner.

"You are stirred at last!" he said.

"Who—I?" said Venner. "Shall we get out of this infernal crush?"

They got out of it—not as quickly as either could have wished.

For their own reasons each wanted to reach Erlscount.

Venner could have told why he wished it. Not so Greville.

He had only the sort of vague instinct of loving souls—that somehow there was trouble, and he must be at his friend's side.

"Well, old fellow!" he said, taking the instantly outstretched hand.

He felt, with a pained surprise, how close Erlscount's grasp was; then loosening it, he turned to Venner.

"So you've braved the ordeal at last!" he said, smiling.

"I assure you it has not been an ordeal," answered Venner. "You have painted a wonderful picture there. It quite took me aback."

"Yes?"

They were in the entry now, and all three paused.

"Which way do you go?" asked Erlscount.

"I thought of taking a stroll down Piccadilly, and perhaps into the Park," said Venner. "These rooms are awfully close!"

"Then your way lies with ours," said Erlscount.

Greville looked at him, and felt that his friend avoided the look.

They went down Bond-street together. Venner began,—

"Yes! a wonderful picture! How could you ever imagine such a face as that girl's? You had a model, of course?"

"Yes, but I am glad to say she looked a good deal happier than her representation."

One can't always get the expression one wants."

"Then what do you do? An ordinary model—I suppose she was that?"

"A professional model—yes."

"Would not be able to even assume that expression."

"It isn't necessary. One wants only the figure, the pose, the features. The expression belonged to the situation, and had to be imagined."

"Oh! imagined. I thought it was perhaps something you had seen," said Venner, with a suppressed satisfaction. "You see how ignorant I am."

"You've taken the first step to brush off your ignorance," said Greville, and then they talked about the theatres till Venner parted from them in the Park, and turned back again.

The minute he had gone Erlscount quickened his pace with the action of a man who wants to fling off some oppression.

"Leigh," said Greville, after waiting in vain for the other to speak, "I don't understand you. What made you seek Venner's society when we might so easily have got rid of him? and then answer all his stupid questions?"

"Don't ask me anything to-day, Morton," said Erlscount, in a suppressed way. "Only one thing—never tell him that either you or I know Violet Herbert. Nay, don't look at me, and, as you love me, think no harm of her."

"Leigh, what do you mean?"

Erlscount did not answer the question, walking on as if he did not hear it. He kept his eyes down, seeming to notice nothing around him—so contrary to his usual way of observing everything that it increased Greville's perplexity.

"I will do anything you ask me, of course," he said. "Do you think it possible that Venner saw that likeness in the picture to Mrs. Herbert I noticed once? It is only in the shape and colour of the eyes. It must have been chance, for you didn't know her till you had nearly done the painting."

Only shape and colour to him! Was it to Venner? Chance? No, a thousand times! But Erlscount only said,—

"I don't know what I think."

For, indeed, he could not think at all. It had been a strain to keep up even that brief talk with Venner, and now alone with a man to whom he need never play a part, he could not at once arrange the chaos of conjectures that confused him.

(To be continued.)

CRUST OR CRUMB.—A curious custom prevails in Old Bierland, in Holland. October is the auspicious month, and on the first Sunday (known as review day) the lads and lassies, attired in their best, promenade the streets separately, stare each other out of countenance, and then retire to make up their minds on the second Sunday, which is called decision day. The young men go up and pay their compliments to the fair one of their choice to learn if they are regarded with favour. On the third Sunday, or day for purchase, the swain is expected to snatch the pocket-handkerchief of his adored one, and if she submits to it with good grace he understands that his chances of winning her are flattering. The captured pledge is restored to the fair owner on the fourth Sunday, the "Sunday of taking possession," and it rarely happens that the damsel refuses the lover for whom she has indicated a preference. On the Sunday following, the suitor, according to custom, calls at the house of his innamorata, where he is asked to tea. If a piece of the crust of a gingerbread loaf be handed to him there is nothing left for him but to retire. If, on the other hand, the parents offer the young man a piece of the crumb he is allowed to come again, and is admitted to the family.

COLD tea is a good old-fashioned remedy for sore eyes. Bathe the eyes frequently, especially before retiring, and you will soon find relief.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

It was Dr. West who broke to Lady Redmond the news of her widowhood. The kind old man said nothing of the paper found by the Earl's side, and his own conviction that it contained some bad news which had brought on the fit. He had known Lady Redmond for years, and he understood her thoroughly, so he dwelt chiefly on the long illness and terrible suffering which would certainly have attacked her husband soon. He told her that the Earl's sudden death had spared him a prolonged struggle with a most painful complaint. At the best, hardly a year of life would have remained to him, and of that half must have been spent in agony.

"And we always fancied him too anxious about himself," said the wife, full of self-reproach. "How heartless we have been!"

"Not at all," replied the doctor. "For years most of the Earl's disorders have been purely imaginary ones. It is only within a short time—the last twelve months, in fact—that he has suffered from any real disease."

Sir Lovel Delamere—to give him his old title for a little longer—held the widow's hand in his as he wished her good-bye, and said earnestly, almost solemnly,—

"You must try to remember Lord Redmond loved me, and for his sake let me do my best to be a man to you, to fill a brother's place to Nora."

The Countess thanked him, little guessing that Vana's disappearance and her husband's death were not the only troubles that had come to her on that bright day of early summer.

Dr. West and Lovel left the house of mourning together, a great sadness stamped on the latter's face, while the doctor's was full of perplexity.

"I can't make it out," he said, in a bewildered tone. "Lord Redmond had no near relations; he was a man of few friendships. What news could a public journal contain which would affect him sufficiently to cause his death? I can't make it out!"

"Nor I. If he had been in business I could have understood it. Many an honest merchant whose honour was dearer to him than life has broken his great heart by reading of the failure of some task which will prevent his meeting his engagements."

Dr. West stood stock-still, though they were in the middle of a West-end thoroughfare in the most fashionable month of the year.

"I believe you've guessed it," he said, slowly. "You had better send for his lawyers."

"But Lord Redmond wasn't in business," objected Lovel. "He knew nothing of it."

"No, but he had invested every penny of his savings in a great joint-stock undertaking which was to bring him fabulous returns. He never drew a penny of the profits, he told me once; he let them accumulate at interest and compound interest as a provision for Miss Redmond and her aunt. When he came into the title the property was terribly embarrassed, and he was only able to make the most trifling settlement on his wife, only a few hundred a year. If this wonderful speculation has failed, that is all there will be for the Countess and that pretty light-hearted child."

Lovel looked graver even than before.

"What was the name of the speculation?"

"I can't tell you. Lord Redmond tried once to persuade me to take a few shares, but I never had a taste for speculation, and so declined. I fancy I threw so much cold water on his splendid scheme that he took care never to mention it to me again."

"And when was this?"

"Three—no, four years ago."

"He may have sold out."

"He may," admitted the doctor, slowly, "but men don't often remember prudence when they have once been bitten by the speculation mania. Do you know the name of his lawyers? I think he employed a London firm."

"Oliver and Boyes, of the Temple. I'll go

round there at once. I wish you'd come with me, Dr. West."

The old man agreed. Lord Redmond had been more friend than patient to him for years, and he had a genuine interest in the fate of these the peer had left behind him.

Sir Lovel had a slight acquaintance with Mr. Oliver, and the two gentlemen were shown into the lawyer's private room without any demur. He looked at the Baronet with genuine concern.

"Are you Lord Redmond's ambassador? I was going to call on him this afternoon, but I waited till I had gleaned all particulars."

"Lord Redmond is dead!"

"Dead! Impossible. I saw him yesterday, and he appeared in perfect health."

"He died quite suddenly this afternoon of apoplexy, and Dr. West"—here Sir Lovel indicated his companion—"thinks the fit was brought on by the shock of reading some bad news in the *Times*, which we found by his side, so we came to you to see if you could throw any light on the matter."

"I am afraid I can. All Lord Redmond's savings and every penny of his private fortune were invested in the Giant Wheel and Axle Company. I had warned the Earl again and again of its insecurity, but no cautions could move him. In to-day's *Times* there is a brief announcement of the failure of the Company."

"And is it true?"

"Perfectly. The ruin is so absolute that three of the directors have decamped with all the money they could lay hands on. The liability of the shareholders was unlimited, and Lord Redmond, as the most substantial man amongst them, would have had to pay up to the last farthing."

"But how could he?" asked Dr. West, who was profoundly ignorant of money matters. "They had got every penny of his savings; what could they expect more?"

"Nothing now that he is dead, and beyond the 'calls' of a company in the course of liquidation. Had he lived he would probably have had to pay over three-quarters of his income for several years. Save for his wife's sake, I should say never was anything more merciful than his sudden death. I knew Lord Redmond thoroughly, and it would have been torture to him to feel that every one was aware of his misfortune. To squeeze and economise in his private expenditure, feeling all he saved must go to the speculation which had already nearly ruined him, would have been simply agony to him."

"But his wife?"

"There will be five hundred a-year for her under the marriage-settlements, not a penny more, and for Miss Redmond absolutely nothing."

"Five hundred a-year!" exclaimed Sir Lovel.

"Why, it wouldn't pay their milliner."

The lawyer smiled, not unkindly.

"I do not doubt you will be generous towards Lady Redmond and her adopted child."

"I?"

"Certainly. The late Earl freed the estate from every claim upon it, and the revenues are now quite clear and unencumbered. You could allow the Countess two thousand a-year, and give the child a handsome marriage-portion without feeling it."

"But I thought you said this miserable Wheel and Axle Company could swamp everything, and claim at least three-fourths of the income?"

"Not of your income," said the lawyer, gravely.

"Your predecessor's liabilities died with him. Were you Lord Redmond's son instead of only a distant cousin, the debtors of the company could claim nothing from you!"

Lovel Delamere flushed and looked uncomfortable, as men of the world often do when they give utterance to a generous thought.

"I shouldn't like any slur to rest on his memory, you know," said the young Baronet.

"He was very kind to me, and I am much attached to his wife. I'd rather never draw a penny from the Redmond property than that people should be able to cast a stone at my predecessor."

"You need not be afraid, Sir Lovel. From first to last the company had nearly a quarter of a million from the Earl, and he never drew a penny

of interest. The remaining directors must have known of the fraud going on; let them make amends. Why, if Lord Redmond had lived it would have been the cruellest imposture to make him pay, but for you to do so would be ridiculous."

"Do you mean it?" asked Lovel, eagerly. "looking at it as a matter of honour, not of mere worldly expediency."

"I do. For you to pay away your fortune in such a manner would be worse than foolish generosity. It would, in the eyes of disinterested people, be simply offering a premium for dishonesty."

"Who is to tell them?"

It was Dr. West who put this question, and it referred to breaking the news of their poverty to Lady Redmond and her niece.

"Sir Lovel would be the most suitable person," hazarded the lawyer, "as their kinsman and intimate friend."

"I couldn't do it!" said Lovel, fiercely.

"Why, I should feel as though I were insulting them. I should like to tell Lady Redmond she must keep the Yorkshire estate and the town house, but I couldn't do it. It would seem like reminding her they were mine. To lose such a husband as that is bad enough, but to lose home, wealth, and position as well seems cruel."

"It is the law of nature," said the lawyer, a little pompously. "Had Lady Redmond a son of her own, the results, as regards her own position and Miss Nora's, would be the same. Everything would go to him, and if he were married his mother would be just as homeless as she is now."

Lovel Delamere thought, as he walked back to his cosy bachelor chambers, that in his whole life he had never passed through so much as had been compressed into the last twenty-four hours. He had proposed to Vana and been rejected; his love had gone forth a wanderer into the wide world. His friend and kinsman was dead. He was Lord Redmond, and Nora and her aunt were almost dependent on his charity.

It was well for them both that Vana's answer had been so positive. Had the faintest chance of winning her been left him Lovel would have left no stone unturned to make her change her purpose. But, as it was, knowing no time would give him Vana, the young nobleman could look at his future from a simple matter-of-fact standpoint.

He loved Vana. His affection for her was such as he would never feel for any other woman; but Lovel knew that he owed duties to his position and his name. If Vana would only have consented he would have braved the censure of the whole world and married her. He would have run in the teeth of every prejudice of his order and made a mere nobody Countess of Redmond—aye, and thought himself a lucky man; but this was not to be.

As he sat far into the night reflecting on his future, he knew there was no question of Vana's yielding; every line of her farewell letter showed it.

To become his wife she would have had to cross the dearest wish of her kindest friends, and the one sentiment which might have nerved her to do this—love for himself—was wanting.

No, Vana Tempest would never be his wife. He must map out his life without any thought of her, and yet the having loved her even had a powerful influence over his plans.

Last December he had been on the eve of proposing to his cousin Nora, and had hesitated because, though he was fond of the bright, sunny-tempered girl, he knew it was in his nature to love far differently from the manner in which he cherished Nora.

He would not propose to Nora then, lest in some dark after time he should meet the woman who was really his kindred spirit, and find out too late what love meant. But now all this was changed; he had loved, and it was in vain.

He should never have for any other woman the passionate worship he would have lavished on Vana Tempest. He could offer to Nora Redmond a calm, cousinly affection. He knew her thoroughly, and understood her like an open book.

She would make a fair and gracious mistress for the grand old Yorkshire home, now his own;

she would give to his children the reversion of honourable ancestry, healthy constitution, sweet temper and virtuous life.

No creature in the world could cavil at such a match; and it would bring great satisfaction to one who sorely needed comfort—the widowed Lady Redmond.

For himself Lovel knew Nora could never be to him the second self that Vana might have become, but she was young, fair, and true, and—he thought—she loved him.

The young Earl of Redmond was not the first man who, failing to win the wife he loves, has been content to take for his lifelong companion the girl who loves him.

Before he went to bed that night he knew quite well how it would be. When the first depth of mourning for her uncle was over, he and Nora should be married.

He would have a fair and loving wife. Society would praise his choice; his home would be well regulated; his friends received with quiet grace, and if, through it all, there was a vacant chamber in his heart—a sense of something missed ever present with him—a turned-down page, so to say, in his life, well, no one would suspect it, and he should not be the first man who, with a lot outwardly perfect, yet in his secret heart still yearns for the bliss “that might have been.”

The funeral was very simple. Lady Redmond, who knew her husband's tastes, ruled it so; and only a few old friends came back with Lovel to listen to the reading of the will.

They all knew that the magnificent bequests to Nora and her aunt were but a dead letter, owing to the failure of the great Wheel and Axle Company; but every person present, except Lady Redmond, believed the young lady would never feel its loss for one, and all regarded her as the future wife of her uncle's heir.

The heir himself and the widowed Countess had a private conversation later on that evening, when everyone else had left and poor Nora had gone to bed with a headache.

Lady Redmond told Lovel she meant to go to Ireland on a long visit to her own relations, and to take Nora with her.

“The child wants a change,” she said, simply; “and I know her uncle will be glad to have us. He is a widower, and as money goes further over there, perhaps if there is a vacant house on his estate Nora and I might settle down in the Emerald Isle.”

The new Earl shook his head.

“You must never settle down anywhere out of England. Dear aunt, I am not good at expressing myself, but don't you think Nora would be happiest in her old home? Do you not feel that if you are called upon to see another bear your title, you would rather that other should be your adopted child? Go to Ireland by all means, if you like, but let it be understood between us that Nora one day returns to Yorkshire as my wife.”

“It was *his* wish,” said the Countess, thinking of her husband; “but I never thought you would fall in with it.”

Lovel attempted no concealment.

“It is only the reversion of a heart I can offer Nora. A week ago the one desire of my heart was to marry Miss Tempest. That can never be; she told me herself that under no circumstances would she be my wife, and I have learned to understand her reasons. Aunt, I can offer you Nora the truest affection, the most loving care. Need she ever know that for two brief months I had dreams of a lot unshared by her?”

Lady Redmond hesitated.

“Are you sure?”

“I am quite sure that Vana will never marry me. I am equally certain I cannot lead a lonely life. Nora and I know each other thoroughly. I can say truly I love her dearly, though not with the worship I gave another. I think she trusts me. Don't you think our life would have a fair chance of happiness if we agreed to spend it together?”

The fashionable papers which chronicled the departure of Lady Redmond and her niece for Ireland also mentioned that a marriage was “arranged” between Miss Redmond and her cousin, the present Earl.

No subsequent editions of the paper contradicted this, and a slight black-robed girl, far away from the haunts of fashion, felt a deep thankfulness at her heart and decided her sacrifice of a happy home had not been in vain, since Lovel had learned already it was best to trust his future to one who loved him rather than waste his heart on a creature who had none to give him in return.

CHAPTER XXX.

PERCY LESTER was not a hopeful man. It seemed as though the error of his youth had left such a blight upon him that a gentle despondency became his normal state, and it grew natural to him to regard things from their darkest side.

It is very strange, but it often happens that when the things which in our early youth we yearn after really come to us, we have ceased to value them. Either the time of waiting was so long our eagerness languished, or else the blessing was purchased at such a fearful price we grew to think it not worth the cost.

In youth and early manhood the one thing Percy longed for was wealth. Gifted with all the qualities to ensure popularity in society, with a handsome face, courtly manners, and aristocratic bearing, he seemed a man just fitted to shine in the upper circles.

He was a society favourite, but his purse was so narrow he had, so to say, to live on his popularity. He spent months together at some nobleman's country seat; he would have almost free quarters at another's town house. He was never treated as a dependent, never made to feel his poverty by either patronage or slight.

But from this very state of things there sprang up two evils—idle, expensive habits, which made it almost impossible for him to settle to any profession that needed hard work, and that, though seemingly a gentleman of independent means, he was as powerless to marry and keep a wife as though he had been a street beggar.

Marriage in his position meant social ruin. The doors ever open to him as a bachelor would have closed directly against the married man. For years he remembered this, and was prudent; then, when turned forty, he forgot all caution and fell hopelessly in love with a penniless nursery governess.

He said himself, and there was some truth in it, he had no thought of wronging Dorothy Tempest. He loved her dearly. She cared nothing for show or society. She would be happy enough hidden away in some quiet village where he could spend his leisure with her, still keeping up his connection with the great world.

She was under twenty, he was forty turned; but so strong was the affection between them that for a time even the strange method of their life took nothing from his bliss; till, six months after their stolen marriage, the gentle Dorothy began to demand her rights, and never saw her husband without insisting he should introduce her to his family as his wife.

If only she had told the real sorrow tugging at her heart he would have been gentler; if she had whispered that she wanted her marriage avowed because in a few months' time a child would be born, who was hers and his, he must have been touched; if she had whispered that, for her baby's sake, it was torture to her to hear his name linked with that of a haughty heiress, why, then he must have relented.

But Dorothy took quite a different course. She claimed the acknowledgment of her marriage as a simple right, giving no reasons at all. She even threatened to go to Sir George Lester and tell him the truth.

It was then that Percy forged the lie he never ceased to regret. Sir George was urging his marriage with an heiress, and had offered him pecuniary help on that condition. It would have meant pecuniary ruin and an eternal breach with his brother had Dorothy carried the story to him then. Percy never meant his wife to leave him; he told the lie about the former marriage simply—as he would have said—to keep her quiet and prevent her going to his family.

It sounded cruel, brutal, as events turned out,

but there was some excuse for the man. He had told Dorothy before the wedding he could not proclaim his marriage for at least a year, and she had consented to the secrecy. Before six months had passed she threatened to go to Sir George, and she never told her husband the reason for her demand, true she was unhappy and sinned against, but Percy was not so heartless as the story at first seemed to say.

She was gone, and within a week of her loss came Simon Lester's will, giving Percy for his life a thousand a year, with the addition of a large amount as each of his brothers or sisters died. There were no conditions, no provisos. If only Dorothy had waited he could have provided her a home not unworthy of a baronet's sister-in-law, and introduced her proudly to all the world as his wife.

The following years of Percy's life were described by Edith Lester in her confidential talk to Dr. Stone. Whether he was wrong to marry a dozen years after his wife's loss, after his utmost efforts to find her had failed, who could say? He told Edith the truth. She knew fully the risk she ran, and consented for love of him.

After their re-marriage one would have said, Peace must dawn for them. Alas! they had long recognised the vicar of Vale Lester as the curate brother so dear to Dorothy; but the introduction into the vicar's family of his orphan niece somehow never struck Mr. Lester, and it was only on the journey from London, after Sir George's death, when his wife alluded to her as Vana, that he felt she must be his child and Dorothy's. Vana was his own pet name for his first wife from her love of bright colours.

How to acknowledge his child without wronging Edith was a problem which drove Percy nearly distracted. He could see no way out of the difficulty. He saw Vana, and thought his first love had come back to life. Then he resolved to leave her his nominee for the great fortune if he should chance to win it, and also to try and save a provision for her. His old sin brought its punishment. No tongue can tell how he had desired children; and lo! this girl, with her angel face and graceful ways, was his own daughter—a daughter a duke might have been proud of, and yet he dared not claim her.

He was still brooding over this, when the suspicion arose that he had assisted in the Vale Lester murder. Another man, knowing his own innocence and feeling that truth must be discovered some day, would have held his own bravely; but Percy was as one stricken with sudden fear. He knew he was innocent, but, poor fellow, his whole life for the last twenty years had been such a tangled web of deceit and concealment that he could not brave this slander out as another might have done; and but for Dr. Stone's kind, generous proposal to go himself and set Miss Deborah right on the matter Percy would have gone on, with no attempt to clear the cloud which hung over him.

He was not a hopeful man, and so he was by no means confident of Dr. Stone's success. And yet the physician had done him untold service, only by starting on the expedition, for his doing so proved at least that he had perfect faith in poor Percy's honour.

“The master wouldn't hurt a fly willingly,” Jane Watson had said, in discussing Percy Lester with Dr. Stone; “but he can't hold up his head and face things out like a man. Because one person hints he's a murderer, he must go about as though all the world believed it. He can't help it, sir; a kinder-hearted man at bottom never breathed, but he's just as full of fears and fancies as though he were a nervous, lackadaisical fine lady.”

And now, the second morning after Dr. Stone's journey to Arden, there arrived a telegram for the little house in Kensington; and Jane, who possessed an almost motherly pity for her nervous employer, took it into Percy herself as he sat alone over his books.

“A telegram please, sir, and the answer's paid for; the boy's just waiting for it.”

“A telegram!”

Percy touched it as though it had been an explosive machine that might go off at any moment.

"What can be the matter now, I wonder?" said Jane, respectfully, "because the boy's rather in a hurry. Don't look so down, sir; very likely it's from Dr. Stone, to ask you to go down to him at Arden."

Thus encouraged, Mr. Lester managed to open the envelope and even glance at the contents; then he turned to Jane with a look of consternation.

"They want me to go to prison. It will half kill my poor wife, I fear."

"Nonsense, sir," said Jane Watson, quite forgetting her respect in her desire to encourage him. "When people go to prison they ain't telegraphed for to ruin themselves! Just let me read it."

He handed it to her at once. Jane Watson managed everything at the little house in Kensington in these days. It was a good thing for the Percy Lesters that she was honest and straightforward, besides being devoted to them both.

"Police Sergeant Stubbs, Holyhead, to Percy Lester, Esq., Kensington,—

"Man discovered here under suspicious circumstances—your address found in his pocket—no other clue. Come, or write instructions at once."

Poor Jane was nearly as bewildered as her master; it took her quite two minutes to collect her thoughts.

"Bless me, sir," she said, at last, "it may be that Mrs. Sharpe; you know half the people thought she was a man dressed up. If I were you I'd go down at once."

"To Holyhead! alone! The journey would half kill your mistress."

"She could never go," said Jane, quickly, "but Judkins, that was butler at the Court, is in London just now. He came up to look for a situation, because he can't bear staying on at Miss Deborah's while she's away. Let me send the boy round for him, sir; 'tis but half a mile, and he can go with you."

"I don't think Judkins likes me."

Jane understood he meant, "I think Judkins suspects me."

"Judkins is as true as steel to the family, sir," replied Jane, simply; "and you know if this should turn out to be Mrs. Sharpe it will be just as well for him to be there. Judkins could recognize her among a hundred—at least he says so."

Jane Watson was a treasure in an emergency. It was after nine when she took the telegram to her master; by ten-fifty Percy Lester and Judkins were steaming out of Willesden Junction by a train timed to reach Holyhead at seven o'clock. They had missed the mail hopelessly, but as they did not want to cross to Dublin that was of no consequence.

"I feel we are on the track, Judkins," said Mr. Lester, hopefully, "though why that woman should carry my address in her pocket I can't imagine."

"I wouldn't be too hopeful, sir," said Judkins, prudently; "but be sure of one thing—I'll swear to that hussy, however she's dressed."

Police-sergeant Stubbs was waiting to meet the train; the indefatigable Jane having telegraphed that Mr. Lester would arrive by it, dressed in deep mourning, and attended by a man in livery. Stubbs had little difficulty in recognising his party.

"Sorry to give you so much trouble, sir," he said, affably; "but this is the strangest business I ever came across!"

"We thought you might have found the person wanted on suspicion of murdering my brother, Sir George Lester?"

"What, the woman Sharpe? No, sir; an old gent was travelling alone from Euston in the mail train last night, and a lady—a regular tip-topper—was put into the same carriage at Crewe. When the train got in here this morning she declared the old gentleman was hopelessly drunk, and that it was a disgrace to the company he should travel in the same carriage with a lady. She took a very high tone, and the porter she complained to, being young, was quite taken in. Indeed, our station-master thought the poor old fellow was dead drunk; but I've seen one or two mistakes of that kind made before, so, instead of

taking him to the police station I sent off for a doctor."

"He said the poor man was suffering from morphia injected in large quantities. Now we searched the carriage through and through, and there's not a trace of a morphia injector. There's none among his luggage either, so it begins to look very black against the lady. He came to once and muttered something about her having killed him, so I thought the best thing to do was to telegraph to you. The poor old boy may be some harmless lunatic who's escaped from an asylum, but, take it all round, it's the strangest case I ever met."

"You have stopped the woman, of course?"

"We couldn't, sir! It was eight turned before the doctor gave his opinion, and the boat would have reached Dublin and been emptied before then. This way please, sir; I'll take you to him, but he's hardly sensible yet. Oh, yes, your servant can come too."

No one could ever have doubted the genuineness of the identification. Percy almost screamed in his surprise as he ejaculated,—

"Dr. Stone!"

"Right you are sir," confirmed Judkins; "that's the doctor which I've known over forty years for the kindest, cleverest gentleman in Norfolk! Him get drunk and frighten a lady! Why, it's not likely!"

"Indeed, sergeant," said Percy Lester, "there has been foul play somewhere. Dr. Stone left my house two days ago; he was then on his way to Bournemouth, and I can form no idea what brought him to Holyhead. He has been a friend of my family for years, and is utterly incapable of drinking to excess."

"Then it looks mighty black against the lady," was the Sergeant's reply. "But stay, though. Did Dr. Stone ever take morphia?"

"He very seldom recommended it to his patients, and I am ready to swear he never took it himself—he had great prejudice against the drug."

"Well, in a few hours he will be himself again, and able to tell you his own account of his adventures. Meanwhile, in the cause of justice, can you tell me if he had any enemy of the opposite sex?"

"He had not an enemy in the world."

But Judkins was less confident.

"What was the lady like, sir. I've an idea in my head about her?"

"She was very beautiful, dark and foreign-looking, dressed in furs, and with an air of distinction about her. I did not see her myself, but that is what I gathered from the porter. She seemed in feverish haste to get to the steamer, and told the man who carried her luggage she had a long land journey after reaching Dublin."

"Mr. Percy, sir," said the old butler, impatiently, "that woman must have been Miss Fenella. There's mischief ahead. She's kept my poor mistress away from her friends these two months. Dr. Stone left you, resolved to see Miss Lester at any cost. Depend upon it he did see her, and he found out what was wrong. He must have been hurrying off to Ireland to see Sir Basil and tell him all."

A light broke on Percy Lester.

"Judkins, I believe you are right. Basil is about the only person who would have a chance of influencing my poor sister. Dr. Stone was going to him with his story and Fenella intercepted him, but then, why should she hurry on to Ireland? She had disabled Stone; surely that was enough." But the old butler was sharper.

"If Miss Fenella's done aught she's ashamed of, sir, she'd have but one aim to get married at once. If once she was Lady Lester, the family would have to put up with her. Let me go off to Roscommon and tell Sir Basil she's half killed the poor old doctor. That'll stop the marriage till you can come after, and tell him just what it is she's been doing at Bournemouth."

And so the two parted company. Percy Lester remained to watch by his old friend's bedside, and Judkins—who had never before been out of England—crossed by the next boat to Dublin, and set off on his long journey to the West of Ireland, hoping against hope he might yet be in time to stop Sir Basil's marriage.

(To be continued.)

HOW FERN LEA WAS CLEARED.

—3—

"Your white roses are just coming into bud, Addie," said Bernard Bret, as he came in from the garden. "Fern Lea is at its prettiest now!"

The coffee exhaled a fragrant odour, the fresh-baked cakes were of the most delicate brown, and the chickens broiled to a turn, but Mrs. Bret's face wore a most tragic expression, as she sat with an open letter in her hand.

"Bernard," said she, hysterically, "what am I to do? Here's your Aunt Brownlow coming here next week with her six children and the nurse! They've had the measles, it seems, and the doctor has prescribed country air, so they've decided to inflict a four weeks' visitation upon me!"

"Oh," said her husband, guiltily, "I forgot to tell you. Lilly Fenton wants to come here this summer. She requires perfect quiet to finish her new novel, and says she retains such a delightful impression of Fern Lea from her last summer's visit!"

"Oh, does she, indeed?" said Mrs. Bret, dashing the cream and sugar recklessly into the sea-green china cups. "And we must remember that your Cousin Burton has kindly volunteered to send Marian here for the summer, so that she may forget that love affair of hers with Dick Forsyth."

"I'm afraid we haven't room for 'em all," said Mr. Bret, reflectively.

"Oh, yes, you have," said Addie, with tears and laughter struggling in her voice. "They'll sleep on the hall hat-rack, on the garret floor or the cellar shelves, sooner than forego the opportunity of getting good country board for nothing! And I shall do as I did last year—get along without a new winter dress and do my own winter housework, because the house-keeping bills were so heavy during the summer. All our relations are very particular, you know, about their eating and drinking, and we had to get new hair-mattresses for the Robinsons, and re-carpet Lilly's room because she 'perfectly abhorred' the old pattern."

"It's outrageous!" said Bret, carving the chickens. "But I don't know how we are to help ourselves without being dreadfully rude."

"Tell them plainly that they cannot come." "Our relations, Addie?" remonstrated her husband.

"It's an imposition," said Addie.

"It's only for a little while, my love. Let 'em come."

"It will be for all summer, Bernard."

"No, it won't. I'll see to that!"

"What do you mean?"

"I've got a plan in my head, my love."

"A plan?"

"Yes. You'll see. Only don't ask any questions."

"But, Bernard," pleaded the young house-keeper, with every hospitable impulse rising up in her heart, "you mustn't treat them rudely!"

"I'll be as pleasant as Panch to them, my love—see if I'm not."

"Bernard, what are you going to do?"

"Don't I tell you, Addie, that it's a profound secret?"

"But you'll tell me me!"

"I'll tell nobody!"

And to this Mr. Bret steadfastly adhered, in spite of Addie's protestations and entreaties.

The authoress arrived, with several huge trunks, a type-writer and a hammock. Miss Marian Burton came by the next train—"like Niobe, all tears"—and Mrs. Brownlow, her nurse, and her six noisy, troublesome young convalescents, brought up the rear.

"Ten people!" said Mrs. Bret to the trustworthy and reliable confidant, herself. "Oh, dear! oh, dear! I might as well have taken a situation for general housework in a summer boarding-house."

"I don't see," said Mrs. Elton, the minister's wife, "what that young Bret is thinking of to allow his wife to be so overriden with relations. The weather is very hot, and she is far from strong. And I am told they sleep

themselves on a sofa-bedstead in the parlour to make room for that swarm of parasites."

"My dear," said the good parson, "are you not expressing yourself rather strongly?"

"I'm only speaking the truth," said Mrs. Elton.

But it soon transpired that Mrs. Bret's visitors, like Barnum's Happy Family, could not agree.

Miss Lilly Fenton could not write without the accompaniment of perfect silence. The little Brownlows could not divert themselves without the hoots and shrieks peculiar to their tender years; and both Miss Fenton and Mrs. Brownlow took exception to the mournful banjo notes on which Marian Burton was wont of an evening to bewail her blighted love.

"They are quarrelling like cats and dogs," sighed Addie to her husband.

"Let 'em quarrel," said Bernard.

"What larks, ma!" said Teddie Brownlow, one afternoon, as he returned from a successful raid upon the hens' nests in the barn. "We've got to take our hammocks and croquet out of the west field."

"What for?" inquired his mother.

"Cousin Bernard has sold it."

"Sold it? How inconsiderate of him!" said Mrs. Brownlow. "Sold it to whom?"

"To the cemetery people."

"What?"

"The cemetery people," enunciated Master Teddie. "The railroad's going right through the old graveyard, and they've got to have a new place. I heard Cousin Bernard tell the carpenter to bring that load of fence posts right off, and I heard him say, too, that it didn't matter so much, because there had already been two or three burials there."

"Burials—there!" gasped Mrs. Brownlow—"under our very windows? Goodness gracious me! I never heard of such a thing!"

"If ye please, ma'am," said Susan the nurse, "that accounts for it."

"Accounts for what?"

"The ghost, mum—all in white!" uttered Susan with chattering teeth. "I seen it last night, mum, as the church clock struck twelve: an I seen it the night before. An I don't wonder, ma'am—the poor, dead bodies bein' dug up and scattered around this way. And if you please, ma'am, you'll suit yourself at once, for not another week will Susan Best live next door to a churchyard!"

"Ma, ma," whispered Bessie Brownlow, who eagerly had devoured every word of the discussion, "I'm afraid of ghosts. Susan says ghosts come after little girls if they don't—"

"Will you hush?" said Mrs. Brownlow, clasping her hands in despair. "Bernard, what is this? Have you sold the west field?"

"Sold it! Why shouldn't I sell it?" said Mr. Bret, who just then came in with a string of speckled brook trout. "They offered me a capital price, and I'm not a rich man."

"But to a cemetery!"

"I don't know a quieter neighbour than a cemetery," said Bernard.

"And I'm sold," said Mrs. Brownlow, with a shudder, "that some burials have already taken place!"

"I didn't suppose you'd mind it, Aunt Brownlow," said the young host.

"Mind it! Why, it's a semi-barbarous proceeding!" cried the lady. "Do we live in a civilised country, or do we not?"

"Ma!" screeched Dickie Brownlow, the second son, jerking at the maternal skirts, "here's a load of wood at the gate—a real big load. Do you suppose that's to make the coffin out of?"

Just then Miss Fenton stalked, à la Lady Macbeth, upon the scene.

"I attach no importance to vulgar superstition," said she, glaring at Mrs. Brownlow, with whom she was no longer on speaking terms. "Of the dead I entertain no fear. But the living are quite a different thing. And I certainly saw a—man, Cousin Bernard, prowling about these premises last night, with a dark-lantern."

"The ghost!" squeaked Susan. "I seen him, too! I did, with these eyes, the blessed saints betwix me and all harm! Oh! oh! oh!"

"Peace, foolish woman!" said Lilly. "This was no shade! It was a burly thief, intent no doubt on mischief. I saw him try to open the back parlour shutter, and then a cart drove by, and he disappeared as if by magic. And I want you to understand, Addie," to Mrs. Bret, "that I can't stand the nervous shock of this sort of thing. My profession requires that I should be untroubled by peaceful calm. I leave here to-morrow."

"An I'll go wid yez," said Susan. "I can't sleep nights in a place where burglars is climbin' up the trellis-work, and poor ghosts come stalkin' around when the church clock strikes midnight, and a whole waggon-load more comin' to-morrow or next day, from the cemetery! Ooh, home! the like of it niver was heard before!"

"Ma, ma! can't we go, too? We're afraid to stay at Fern Lea any longer!" pleaded the little Brownlows, in chorus.

And so there was a general exodus.

"Bernard is this true?" said Mrs. Bret, when the last load of trunks had disappeared round the curve of the road.

"Is what true? You're not afraid of ghosts, are you, Addie?"

"No; but—"

"Don't fret, my dear," said Bret, composedly. "The cemetery has purchased some land, but it happens to be on the other side. I'm not to blame, am I, for Teddie Brownlow's blunders?"

"But the load of wood?"

"I've sold the field to Doctor Trent, and he's going to build a gem of a Queen Anne cottage. I can't imagine any pleasanter neighbours than the Trents will be; can you?"

"Y-yes," said bewildered Addie, "but the burials that had already taken place there? You said yourself—"

"My dearest girl, don't you remember that we buried Fairy, your pet spaniel, under the sweetbriar bush there?—and the two canaries, last autumn?"

"Oh, Bernard, aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Who—I? Not in the least."

"But the ghosts, Bernard? the burglars?"

"Here comes Marian," said Mr. Bret, with a sudden assumption of more than judicial gravity. "Come here, you false damsel, and own up at once what I've already been sharp enough to discover for myself."

"Oh, Cousin Bernard!" stammered poor Marian, blushing celestial rose-red, and trying vainly to hide her face behind the blue-ribboned banjo in her hand.

"I am neither Susan Best, nor the Brownlow children, nor yet Lilly Fenton," mercifully went on Bernard. "And I shrewdly suspect that the ghost was Dick Forsyth in a white tennis suit, haunting the green field beneath his sweetheart's windows, and the burglar no other than Dick in black, climbing up the trellis after a letter, which he well knew where to find."

Marian blushed redder than ever.

"Now I'll have no more of this," said Bernard, with mock sternness. "Confess, young woman, at once, that you and your love affair are at the bottom of all this mystification. Dick Forsyth has owned up."

"Oh, Bernard!" sobbed Marian. "And will you, too, turn against me?"

"Not a bit of it," said Bernard Bret, cheerfully. "Don't fret, little one. Dick has just told me that he has been appointed to a good berth in the General Post-office, and I've written to your mother that things are all right. He's a jolly good fellow, and it isn't necessary for him to play ghost out in the cold any longer."

Marian threw herself, weeping with joy, into Addie Bret's arms, and the two women rejoiced together.

Bernard smiled.

"My plan hasn't worked so badly," said he.

H. F. G.

THE SECRET WHICH PARTED THEM.

—O—

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LEONI found the Viscount's card in the basket hanging upon his door that night after John Ridge was, as he supposed, gone, and when he went to bed he discovered that his money had disappeared from his bedroom.

It had been a day of worry. The breaking of his golden love dream had, of course, been the worst.

The loss of the money was extremely annoying, for, putting aside the fact that he could not afford it, there is something remarkably unpleasant in feeling that there is an unknown thief about, and the final vexation at missing the Viscount made the last straw upon the camel's back.

Leoni Angelo sat late into the night, absolutely doing nothing; his energies seemed benumbed, as they had done after his mother's death.

At length he persuaded himself to go to bed, and that blessed restorer, sleep, spread her soft and healing wings around him.

It was late for him when he arose, for he was generally up with the lark.

By the time he had breakfasted, he remembered the advice in Lady Constance's letter, and determined to, as she bade him, try and make a friend of Viscount Venwood, even though he had heard such an account of him the day before from Colonel Vivian.

Moreover, for Lady Constance's sake, he made up his mind to warn the Viscount of what was being said.

Armed with the card and the address in Mayfair, Leoni started to walk the not very great distance, and arrived at the house at noon, the fresher and better for the exercise.

The well-trained footman, so very different in stamp to John Ridge, obeyed Lady Winifred like a machine.

"She had told him to show Mr. Angelo in to her, and he did it."

Perhaps she had hoped that Leoni would come, for she could not be persuaded to ride with her brother or drive with her mother.

Therefore, in reply to the artist's inquiry for the Viscount, the footman merely bowed, entered into no explanation whatever, but just showed him into the boudoir where Lady Winifred was in the depths of a luxurious lounging chair reading.

As Leoni was announced she sprang to her feet with a bright and eager face to welcome him, but the artist stood still.

"I beg your pardon," he said, bowing politely, "I am afraid there has been some mistake. I asked for Viscount Venwood."

"That is quite right," she replied, with a winning smile. "Perhaps you will not mind putting up with his sister until he comes. He will very shortly be home. I desired our servant to ask you in. It is a pleasure to me to welcome you to my father's house. I have not in the least forgotten your kindness, and I hope we shall yet be friends."

"Is not that rather a risky offer?" he asked, accepting the white hand which she extended to him, as his dark eyes rested on the beautiful open face with honest admiration. "You know so little of me that it would be scarcely fair of me to accept your offer, although, if the truth must be told, I am in a lonely position, and such friendship might prove a solace."

"I am so glad," said Winifred, brightly. "I knew we should be friends if ever we met, and I am glad we have done so," and she turned the chair, in which she had been seated, around for her visitor, and took another near it.

"I wonder why you and Stirling are so much alike?" she exclaimed, suddenly, as she caught sight of his profile.

"Are we so?" he asked, with interest.

"I think both you and he will admit that," she laughed, "although you may not be flattered. I have noticed that people get

themselves disliked on both sides who discover likenesses."

"Have you? Well I for one will promise not to dislike you," and he looked at her longingly.

The love which he had felt for Lady Constance was, as it were, floating upon the surface of his heart, and pervading his mind and feelings. Hearts are said to be caught at the rebound, but in Leoni's case there was no rebound.

He had not turned from Lady Constance at all, still he dared not let his love now rest on her with the passionate devotion of which his nature was capable, and with which his being was filled to overflowing, and the tender feelings were there, ready to run into any channel where kindness and gentleness might lead them.

Lady Winifred was very kind and gentle. She more than liked Leoni; he was her hero. She cared not one straw that he did not know who is own father was. Had he been the cobbler it would have been all the same to her.

If the truth must really be told, her mind had been resting upon him very tenderly ever since that day when he had stopped her horse in the Park.

"Is it not strange that in calling upon Viscount Venwood I should meet you again?" he said, smiling at her. "The world must be uncommonly small, or Fate very strong. I wonder if we were fated to meet?"

"I think we were," she replied, with a vivid blush. "It seems we are to be friends, does it not? and I am sure there is sympathy between us."

"Yet so far I do not even know your name! you must instruct me," he said, brightly.

"It is Winifred Douglas," she told him. "Fancy your never knowing up to now. I learnt yours very soon, and have been so greatly interested in your pictures. How fascinating art must be!"

Admire an author's books, an artist's pictures, a mother's children, and they are your own!

Leoni was not above the weakness of his kind. His face beamed with pleasure as this girl spoke to him of one of his works after another, with an evident knowledge of, and interest in them. Deeply as he loved Lady Constance, the pain of disappointment was lulled at that moment.

So very pleasant was the society of Lady Winifred that he wanted nothing else just then, and as for the girl herself, she was rarely happy.

"Mr. Angelo," she said, "we must not get my poor groom into disgrace. He means well, and I do not wish my parents to know of that little episode in the park. It would make my mother anxious and the Earl angry!"

"Of course I will never mention it," he returned, willingly. "and since we have thus met naturally again, there can be no need to explain our former acquaintance; but I think if you show me so much kindness, I shall grow very grateful to your groom, Lady Winifred."

"It is pleasant to hear you say that," she answered, with a bright and happy look, so happy that Leoni appeared to be led on, all against his will, to say things which he had not thought possible a few hours before.

"Lady Winifred," he said, softly, "I accept your proffered friendship—accept it with all my heart, I hope it will not be only in words, but in truth. You have drawn me to you greatly. I cannot tell you how your gentleness has comforted me. I came to you very sorrowful, and human sympathy is a wonderful solace. Do you think, like myself, that you will ever grow grateful to your groom for throwing us together?" And his dark eyes rested on hers affectionately.

They looked strangely alike at that moment. Then her thick, long lashes veiled the tender, soft, dark eyes, a crimson hue mantled her cheek, and she answered him soft and low,—

"I am grateful now. I have longed to know you better, and to be your friend."

"That settles it," he replied. "I, too, am more than glad to have such a friend. We must clasp hands upon the bargain, Lady Winifred."

The clasp was accepted and returned cordially, and both the young people felt a sense of regret when the carriage stopped at the Hall door, and the Countess stepped from it.

"It is mamma," said Winifred, warmly. "She is such a dear, you are bound to like her!"

But if the truth must be told, at that moment Winifred would have thought her a greater dear if she had stayed away a little longer.

The Countess entered the room with a less placid face than usual, and began her news before she saw that her daughter had a visitor.

"Winny," she exclaimed, "the *Mermaid* has returned at last! What do you think of that? I really began to be anxious. And now Stirling is wild; he is in a fearful state of excitement, and I believe he has started for Southsea—no, for Ryde, I think it was—before now. I met him dashing along in a hansom. Some one saw it in the paper, and sent him a line at the Club, and I sorely suspect it was Lady Constance, although he will not admit that he is in correspondence with her. That is a mystery I should like to solve."

Winifred had advanced to meet her mother, to try and make some explanation as to who her visitor was, but her desire now was to stay her conversation.

"Mother," she said, in her especially pleasant and soothing—one might say, *caressing*—voice, "do you not see that I have a visitor? This is Mr. Angelo, whose pictures we so very much admire. And he has been waiting for Stirling, so you see I have been the gainer, and have had the pleasure of his company."

The Countess advanced to wards him with a smile.

"We are great admirers of art, Mr. Angelo," she said, kindly; "and your pictures have given us much pleasure. You are very welcome here, and I hope it will not be your last visit to us. But the Viscount, I am afraid, you will not see to-day."

And she shook hands with him.

"I will not mind that as I may come again," he replied, frankly. "Your daughter has taken compassion on me and given me a rarely happy hour."

And before night Leoni had a spirited sketch of Lady Winifred upon his easel.

CHAPTER XXXV.

VISCOUNT VENWOOD had heard from Lady Constance as the Countess of Douglas had guessed, for she had come upon a paragraph mentioning the arrival of the *Mermaid*, in the very paper which the Viscount had given her, and she had, with her usual kindness, sent him a line the moment she discovered it, and her news let a flood of gladness loose in the young man's heart.

As we have seen, he rushed off to Ryde, but what he expected to do there Heaven only knew.

Impetuous lovers seldom wait to think. If Sir John would not receive him on shore, it was scarcely likely that he would do so afloat.

The one instinct of Stirling Douglas was to fly to Stella Eustace, and to be as near her as possible.

His impatience knew no bounds. The express train seemed to his excited imagination scarcely to be moving at all.

But Ryde was reached at last, and he was shown the *Mermaid*, riding at anchor near at hand.

He hired a boat and sailed around her, but not a sight could he gain of Stella, for a very good reason, she was not there, but in London, from whence he had come, hoping for a sight of her!

And this fact he did not ascertain for a couple of days!

In the meantime the honourable Mr. Pen-

nington had not been idle. He called at the "Carlton Club," where he learnt that the Viscount had been there that morning, and that he was living with his father, the Earl of Douglas, in Mayfair.

To Mayfair, then, he went upon the afternoon of the very day upon which Lady Winifred had entertained Leoni Angelo in the morning.

The sedate footman remembering former instructions said the Viscount was not at home, but it was possible that the Countess or Lady Winifred might be able to say when he would be, or perhaps he, Mr. Pennington, would like to see them!

Jo Pennington hesitated, then decided in favour of the ladies. So he was ushered in.

Both the Countess and her daughter were too well bred to show any surprise at the sight of the stranger.

He had learnt from Stella that they were both her friends in the unhappy love affair, so he met them cordially.

"I must apologize for this intrusion," he said openly "but the truth is, I very particularly want to see Viscount Venwood, and I thought it was better to come to the fountain head for information at once. I have only just landed from the *Mermaid*, and want to get back to Ryde to see about my own yacht, but I cannot go until I have had an interview with your son. Will you kindly tell me when that will be possible?"

"From the *Mermaid*!" exclaimed the Countess eagerly. "Then you can no doubt give me news of dear Stella Eustace."

"I can indeed. I have been many months in her company. She is a very, very sweet girl."

"She is, truly. I am really fond of her. Are you in her confidence, Mr. Pennington?"

"As we are all friends here, I think I may speak the truth with safety," he answered, with a smile.

"It is a melancholy thing that one cannot always venture to do that, is it not, Countess?"

"It is indeed," she laughed.

"Oh, do tell us more about Stella," cried Winifred. "I am so fond of her. Stirling has torn off to Ryde upon the chance of gaining even a sight of her. He is wild with joy at her return. Is it not a pity that both her father and ours should spoil their happiness?"

"The Viscount will not find Miss Eustace at Ryde; she is in London!"

"So that in seeking her, poor Stirling is really running away from her?" remarked the Countess.

"That is just it, but she is very anxious for news of your son, I can assure you."

"It is hard that we are not allowed to go to her," said Winifred, "and Sir John is just as bad as papa, but you will take letters from us to her, will you not? to tell her that she is not forgotten."

"Indeed I will, with the greatest pleasure."

"I am afraid we shall tire you out with questions," recommenced the Countess, "but please tell us where Stella has been all this time? We have never heard a word of her."

"We have been to Africa."

"To Africa! Why what could have induced Sir John to take Stella there?" said Lady Douglas, with interest.

"Well, the fact is that we went in search of Colonel Vivian, and having found him we brought him home with us."

"Colonel Vivian! Well, now I am glad that you came in. What is all this mystery about him and my very dear friend, Lady Constance? A better woman never lived, and yet detrimental rumours are abroad both concerning her and him. Can you throw any light upon the subject? I shall be really grateful to you if you can, for I cannot even find out what has become of Lady Constance. I have thought just lately that Stirling knows something about her, but there I may be wrong; he is certainly unusually reticent about her."

Mr. Pennington looked very grave.

"These reports must be silenced. Colonel Vivian has, I hope and believe, returned to England on purpose to put them down. From the little I have heard, nothing but his voice

can quiet the absurd rumours which have been set about. The worst part of it is that although the death of his wife has broken the Colonel's heart, there is no doubt he himself was her avenger. Miss Eustace has told me what Lady Constance was, therefore I feel sure that he had no cause for his anger against her."

"The death of his wife!" replied Lady Douglas, with a saddened look. "You don't tell me that that dear young creature is dead?"

"She was drowned, while out sketching, by the rising of the tide. I am afraid she had a sad time of it altogether. Miss Eustace has felt it very, very much."

"I should think so, indeed. I feel quite upset myself," said the Countess, brokenly.

Winifred was looking very pale and sad. The beautiful dark eyes were swimming with tears.

"She was such a sweet woman," she murmured. "I cannot bear to think we shall never see her again."

"Mr. Pennington," continued the Countess, "will you kindly tell me what fault Colonel Vivian professed to find in her?"

"That has never been definitely explained to me. Miss Eustace even does not know; but there is no doubt in my mind that Sir John does, and pardon me if I pain you: I am equally certain that his hatred to your son in some way bears upon the affair."

"His hatred to my son!" echoed the Countess in surprise. "What can poor Stirling have done to offend him?"

"Lady Douglas, was the Viscount ever very fond, too fond, of Lady Constance?" asked Jo Pennington, regarding her intently.

The Countess looked at him in utter bewilderment.

"What could have put such an idea into your head? Stirling never knew Lady Constance until she was married, and she cared too much for her husband to give any other man a thought. I can assure you. As for Stirling, he has never loved any one but Miss Eustace, and never will. It is a way the Douglasses have. They are obstinately tenuous in love. I wish it were otherwise, for my poor boy's sake, for if the two fathers do not consent, what is to become of the happiness of those two poor children? I really believe Sir John would consent if only the Earl would. He was ever a kind-hearted man."

"Lady Douglas, I must see your son. I want to help him, and to do so I must speak plainly. Colonel Vivian has something against him! and he has entirely poisoned Sir John's mind. I do not believe he would consent to his union with Miss Eustace if he were the only man on earth—I don't, indeed. And he has told his daughter as much. She is, and has been, very miserable, as you may imagine. I shall be glad to convey letters from you both to her, if you have kind words to say to the poor girl. One thing I must tell you, her faith in the Viscount is perfect, although he has been represented to her as a scoundrel. No other man will ever gain even a small share of the heart of Stella Eustace. She is a true woman."

"It is very cruel," murmured Winifred, sadly. "Oh, mother! we must help them! How are we to do it?"

Lady Douglas was looking very grave.

"The matter is a serious one," she said sorrowfully. "The Earl ought to know of this, but we dare not tell him. His hatred to Sir John Eustace is almost an insanity. I shudder to think what would happen if those two men met in anger. Mr. Pennington, you are a stranger, and yet I am treating you as a real and true friend, and if I am any reader of faces, you will not fail me. You will help my dear son to the knowledge of what he is charged with, will you not? Every man should, in justice, know of what offence he is accused, and I am quite, quite certain that Stirling can disprove aught which Colonel Vivian may say against him. He is a dear, good boy, and the soul of honour, I am sure."

"Mother is right," struck in Winifred's soft voice. "You have been a real friend in telling us."

"Now you come to mention it, Mr. Pennington," said the Countess, reflectively, "Colonel Vivian was very odd the last time he visited us at Norrington Castle. His manner annoyed the Earl, and he desired me to invite Lady Constance when I liked, but not to include her husband in the invitation. But from that time, very nearly two years ago now, I think it must be, I have never seen either of them, and I have only received one letter from Lady Constance. I wrote more than once, but never had any reply. I little thought my poor friend was beyond the reach of my affection."

"Poor dear!" murmured Winifred. "If Colonel Vivian was wicked to her how glad she must have been to die, and to find that peace and rest which she could never know here. Mother, we shall miss her, but we must not wish her back."

Mr. Pennington was touched by her words, and rising, he went to the window and looked out. After a time he turned and took up a book.

"Don't mind me," he said, "I am going to read while you write to Miss Eustace. I think a few words from you both will be a comfort to her. And if you will send me a line to the Grand Hotel, Charing Cross, when the Viscount returns, I will come at any hour he will appoint. From now I am remaining in town entirely for his sake and that of Stella Eustace. If I can help them to be happy, I will do my very best."

When Mr. Pennington was gone, his ears would have been fully justified in baring, for both the Countess and Lady Winifred talked of him for the rest of the afternoon, and they agreed that they had never seen a nicer, kinder man.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

VISCOUNT VENWOOD returned to town considerably disgusted to find that he had been wasting his time, but that was nothing compared to his anger at the news which his mother had for him, both concerning Lady Constance and himself, nor did he in the least know what to say or do. He had promised not to reveal her address, therefore he felt himself tongue-tied.

"It was shameful that Colonel Vivian should report her death. It must have been done for some evil purpose of his own," he asserted; but Lady Douglas repeated what Mr. Pennington had told her, that they had gone to Africa to find Colonel Vivian, and that the news of his wife's sad end had well-nigh broken his heart.

More furious still was he when he learnt that he had been accused of some mysterious wrong-doing by the Colonel. With conscious innocence he vowed to go at once and make the soldier "eat his words," but the awkward part of it was he did not in the least know where to go, so he followed his mother's advice and drove off to the Charing Cross Hotel to find Jo Pennington, who was in.

The two men stood for a breathing space mentally taking one another's measure. Then both simultaneously held out their hands, each being satisfied that the face before him was an honest one.

"It is very good of you to wait in town for me," said the Viscount, taking the seat which Mr. Pennington offered him. "I have only just returned, and can make neither head nor tail of the story my mother has told me. What is it I am supposed to have done?"

"I do not know; I can only tell you that Colonel Vivian's violence against you is fiendish, and that he has greatly injured you with Sir John Eustace and tried to do the same with his daughter, but Miss Eustace of course will not hear a word to your detriment."

"My precious girl! dear sweet Stella. I should only expect that from her. Did she

know you were coming to see me? Did she send any message?" he inquired eagerly.

"Very many I expect in this," said Jo, with a melancholy smile, and unbaiting his breast pocket, he gave Stella's letter to her lover, adding that he was to be his "Mercury" and take an answer back.

The face of the Viscount glowed with a sudden glad light as his fingers closed upon the envelope, and he saw the beloved and familiar handwriting and muttering an apology to Jo Pennington, he broke the seal, and was soon deep in the well-covered sheet. Jo went out of the room and left his rival alone with his happiness. If a pang of envy shot through his heart, who shall blame him? Jo Pennington was a fine character, still he was human, and he had loved Stella long and truly.

When he returned, the Viscount was pacing the room in agitation.

"What a foul shame it is to have got up these cruel lies against me!" he cried. "Of course I must go to the bottom of it at once, there is no question about that. Surely your idea is not possible that Colonel Vivian could doubt my honour or that of his wife, who is one of the most noble women I know."

"Unfortunately you must put it in the past tense," replied Mr. Pennington with regret. "So many people speak of the gentle lady's virtues, that I feel grieved to know that such a true heart no longer beats."

The Viscount paused in his walk, hesitated, went on again, paused a second time and looked in Mr. Pennington's face.

"I'm in a fix," he said, "Does anything justify a man's breaking his promise to a lady?"

"Nothing, I should say."

"That is my opinion too, unless it is a matter of life and death. I have made a promise which ties my hands, and it is not possible for me to see Colonel Vivian until I have my release from it."

"I would start at once and gain it, but that I might make the tangle worse. I wish to Heaven I knew what to do, but I don't, and that is the fact."

"Can I help in any way?" asked Mr. Pennington. "I hope you understand that my sympathies are with you entirely."

"You can assist me greatly, but not in this matter. I have no right to tell, even to so kind a friend as you have proved yourself to be, what has been confided to me."

"Will you write to Miss Eustace?" asked Jo. "I must be at her house by four if I have a mind to catch her, and I think she should hear at once that you are all right. I have been up there twice, and she is very anxious for news of you, poor girl."

"What a thoughtful good fellow you are!" exclaimed the Viscount. "We can talk of the rest another time. Will you dine with me at my club to-night, and we will discuss it over our cigars? You smoke, I suppose?"

"I do," laughed Jo. "It comes as naturally to me as it does to a chimney."

"That is right then," and drawing his chair close to the table, the Viscount seized a pen, and began to write as quickly as he could apply it to paper.

Jo looked anxiously at his watch from time to time. He wanted Stella to get her letter that afternoon, and when Viscount Venwood had finished he had a hansom at the door and was ready to start.

"I am thinking more of Miss Eustace's happiness than of politeness to you," he laughed. "We can talk in the evening. Oh, I drop you any where en route!" I won't go out of my way for any one."

But the Viscount did not feel much inclined for conversation then. He wanted to think it out, and walked on somewhat aimlessly.

Suddenly he became aware that he was being stared at; he looked up and met a pair of strangely handsome dark eyes fixed upon him with an expression of surprise and interest in them. The gentleman was just getting into a hansom, and he hailed another.

"Keep that cab in sight," he said, "a few



["IT IS AN UGLY THING FOR A MAN'S HONOUR TO BE IMPUGNED!" LEONI SAID, GRAVELY.]

shillings is no object. Don't lose sight of it, stop when it stops."

The cabman looking delighted with his job, grined, touched his hat, and obeyed. As may be supposed, it was Leoni Angelo whom the Viscount was following. He had been so struck by his likeness to himself and his family, that he determined not to lose sight of him, and to find out where the individual lived, and whether he was the artist whom Lady Constance had begged him to see, and whom his sister Winifred agreed with her was better looking than himself! He would not, of course, admit that.

He knew that his mirror reflected a decidedly handsome face, and he was bound to confess that Leoni's was not inferior to it.

The artist's cab stopped, and so did that engaged by the Viscount. Both men paid their fares, and Leoni entered his house without looking behind, and went upstairs more slowly than was his wont, for he was in a thoughtful mood.

The Viscount followed him, and as Leoni was in the act of closing his door, he became aware of advancing footsteps, and for the second time the two had a good look at one another.

"I think I need not ask who you are?" said Leoni, who was the first to speak. "The Lady Winifred Douglas is surely your sister. There is a strong likeness between you."

"That is scarcely to be wondered at," replied the Viscount, "but it is strange why you should be like both of us, which undoubtedly you are."

"There may be things to explain even that," Viscount said Leoni. "Pray, come in; we have a bond of union in both being friends of the best woman on earth—Lady Constance Vivian."

"She is a good woman, very good, but you must not expect a man who is in love to admit that any one can be so good as his lady fair. I will agree that Lady Constance is second

best. By Jove! what a speaking likeness that is of her, and—why that is Winifred upon your easel, and a pretty picture it is. I suppose you have seen a good deal of her lately, which has enabled you to draw her so correctly; she cannot have sat to you."

"No; she has never so honoured me. I think you must be very proud of your sister, Viscount?"

"I am. She is a splendid girl, a thorough good sort; she would do anything kind for any one."

"I can see that. I was sorry to find her and the Countess so sad this afternoon—I have just come from there now—more especially as their sorrow is groundless, as I explained to them. They believed Lady Constance to have been drowned, but as I had the privilege of going to her rescue, I can say with certainty that she is alive and well. And surely you might have relieved their minds upon that score, as you have heard from and seen her ladyship lately? She has written to me of your visit to her, and I have heard of your intimacy with her from other sources." And Leoni regarded him intently.

The Viscount looked none the less keenly at the artist.

"Come," he said, sitting down, "you and I must come to some explanation. What other sources do you refer to?"

"Colonel Vivian was my authority," he replied, very gravely. "He brought charges against you which, were I in your place, I should meet before I even slept. It is an ugly thing for a man's honour to be impugned."

"It is," returned the Viscount. "And I must, as you say, clear my name; but I am in an awkward position. I must not speak of Lady Constance to others, for she bound me down not to mention her or where she is living. But I must go or write to her. Still there can be no harm in my mentioning her to you, since you know her whereabouts as well as I do. This was my difficulty to-day when

my mother and sister were told by Mr. Pennington that she was dead."

"Colonel Vivian is perfectly aware that she is alive, I am sure. He most decidedly spoke of his wife, and in the most agitated terms. He also spoke of you, Viscount. He brought against you such an accusation as you must refute, if honest men are to respect you. Yes! for Lady Constance's sake you must answer him plainly; in damning you he is also condemning her, and she must be protected. I still believe in her, but it is for you to clear her name and your own."

"You are the second man to day who has told me this," cried the Viscount, as pale as death, and his eyes ablaze with anger. "Tell me, if you can, definitely of what I am accused, and you will not find me backward in taking the matter up."

"You have done Colonel Vivian no wrong?" asked Leoni, eagerly.

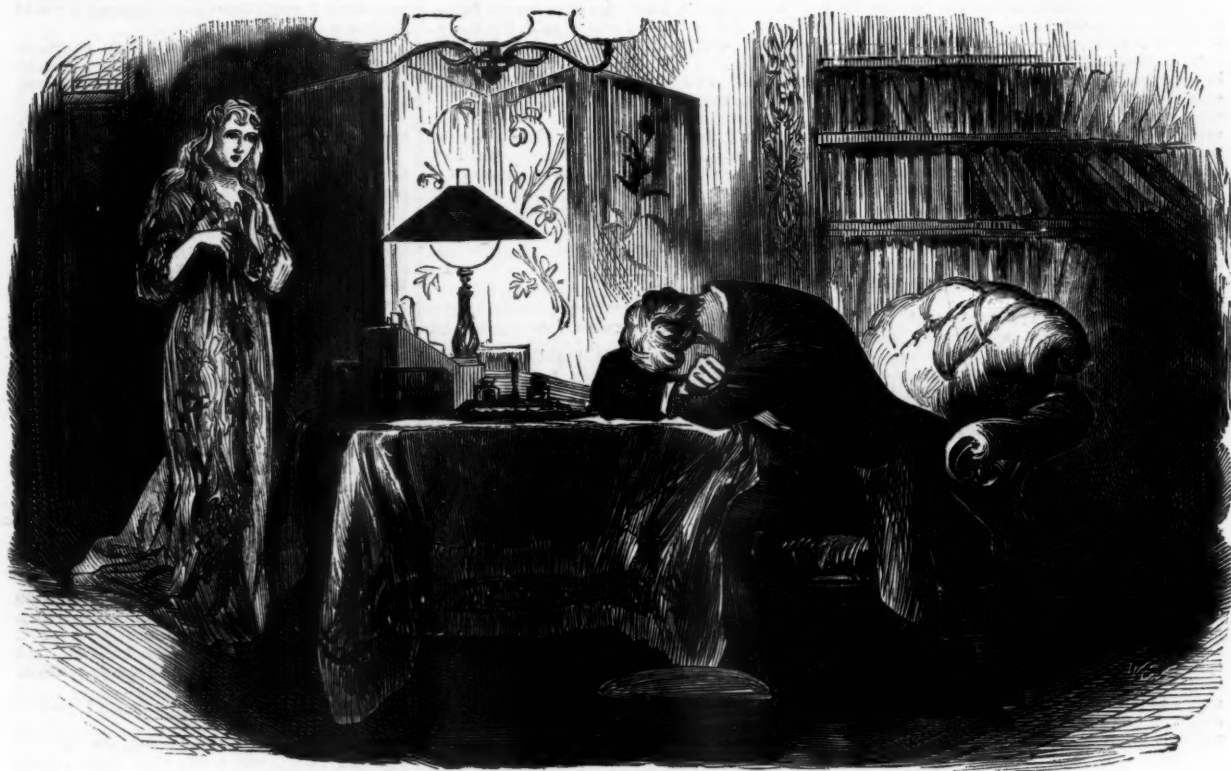
"None whatever, so help me, Heaven!"

"Enough!" replied the artist, grasping his hand. "Yes, I will help you. There is nothing I hate like injustice. Colonel Vivian shall not stab you in the dark. I believe I can repeat his very words to you. He said of you: 'He is a second David. He robbed me of the wife I loved, who I believed loved me in return!'"

"He must be mad," gasped the Viscount. "What a cruel accusation against her and me! Mr. Angelo, how would you like such a tale to be carried to the woman you love? This has been told to the girl to whom I am pledged. But, thank Heaven! her heart is too pure to receive such poison, and she is true to me. Poor Lady Constance! this is the most terrible of all for her, for, madman though he must be, she was devoted to her husband."

"I felt from the first that she had known deep sorrow," said Leoni. "Viscount, we must put ourselves aside, and do our best to really help her."

(To be continued.)



SUNBEAM STOOD IN HER HUSBAND'S PRESENCE, WITH HER "HEART IN HER MOUTH!"

NOVELETTE.

LADY SUNBEAM.

—O—

CHAPTER I.

"SHE IS NOT THE WIFE FOR YOU."

She was called "Sunbeam," "Sunshine," "Kitten," "Mayflower," "Fairy," "Sprite"—anything but her own name, which was simply May.

She was one of those creatures who are always called by any amount of pet names—the first that came handy; and the one that stuck to her most persistently was Sunbeam.

She was a veritable sunbeam. She seemed born only to bring sunshine and brightness into every one's life, to dance and sing, and lighten up the corners—one of those vivid, happy temperaments that revel in the mere fact of being alive, to whom a beautiful form or colour—a flower, a leaf—gives a sort of intense joy just because they are lovely. Her eye roamed from one thing to another, resting on what was beautiful, shunning what was ugly.

And she herself was most beautiful—the most perfect little form. She was not tall. She was slender and graceful as a kitten, with delicately made hands and feet, with skintints that were like porcelain, with great brown eyes that sparkled and flashed; looked arch and wistful now and then, and had an odd, luminous look in them too, notwithstanding they were so brilliant, and a head "sunning over with curls."

That was May Charteris, before whom and whose charms Sir Wilford Errol went down like a nine-pin. He surrendered at discretion.

There never was a doubt about it from the beginning, and the beginning wasn't far from the end. And Sir Wilford was a very great

catch, for he was very handsome—every one liked him for the winning charm and sympathy of his nature.

And he was very rich, for though of hereditary lands he had not a great deal, and derived but a small portion of his income therefrom, an uncle, by marriage, who had accumulated a large fortune in successful speculations, had bequeathed the whole of this to his favourite nephew.

So when Wilford asked to be allowed to transfer Sunbeam from her father's heart into his own, Mr. Charteris made no objection, if Sunbeam approved of the transfer.

And Sunbeam did approve. No one but Wilford could make out that she had it in her nature to give a very devoted or profound love, but he swore she had depths in her that other folks didn't see, and that she loved him not only for his handsome person and his position, and his wealth, but for himself.

"She isn't the wife for you, Wilford," said his sister Isabel, dogmatically. Isabel was fond of laying down the law, and disliked the idea of giving way in her brother's house to this little fly-away Hop-o'-my-Thumb, who cared only for beautiful dresses and sparkling jewels.

"She's as vain as a peacock. Do you know what she said to me one day, quite frankly and without a blush? 'I like to look at my reflection, it is so lovely—I do like lovely forms.' I stared, and she couldn't think what she had said, or pretended not to; then she laughed as, I suppose, it dawned on her, and said, skipping away, 'Oh, Wilford would understand.' Nonsense!"

"Wilford does understand, my dear girl," returned that young man, with a lazy smile.

"The child isn't vain. It's just the love of beauty; it's impersonal, don't you see?"

"I confess I don't. I fail to understand such subtle distinctions!" said Miss Errol.

"Well, I warn you, Wilford. When too late you'll find her utterly wanting—shallow, vain,

frivolous! Why, all her life she's been looked on as a child who could do nothing but dance through life. Every one has waited on her, she must do nothing—everything disagreeable must be kept from her. She's just like a Dresden china ornament—"

"All right. Have you done, sister mine?" said that good-tempered Wilford.

"No; I haven't. She's frightfully extravagant—doesn't know anything about housekeeping, or the ordering of a big establishment—"

"Oh, that's all right, Bella," interrupted Wilford, laughing. "My Sunbeam won't want to interfere with you. Of course you'll stay on with us, and take all that off her shoulders till you marry?"

"Well, of course, if you wish it," said Isabel; "but there's another thing, Wilford—there's Hal—"

"What about Hal?" said Wilford, lazily.

"Well, people will say you married a child for your young brother to flirt with," said Isabel, but she grew pale at the way Wilford flashed out—

"Isabel, be careful what you say," he said, with more anger than he had ever shown his sister. "Hal will be her brother. He is wild and unstable enough, but he is an Errol. Flirting is out of the question between brother and sister."

"Oh, not serious, of course," said Isabel, subdued; "but May is so heedless. Well, I didn't mean anything, Wilford," as Wilford looked blacker at that; "but I tell you Sunbeam has no heart, and it grieves me to the soul to see you infatuated with a silly little creature like that, who hasn't a serious or intellectual thought in her head."

"A terrible indictment! My poor little Sunbeam," said Wilford, smiling now. He was very easy-going, and his flash of anger soon died away. "You can do all the intellectuality of the house, and leave the spooning to Sunbeam and me."

"She won't care about that after the honeymoon," said Isabel, bluntly, "unless it means jewels and dresses."

"Ah, there we differ, my child," returned her brother, calmly. "If Sunbeam is a trifling vain, all girls are. I wouldn't like to see a pretty girl who wasn't a little vain. And, sister mine," said Wilford, rising and patting, half banteringly but very affectionately, the neat head of his sister, "there are other kinds of vanity than that of a lovely person, aren't there?"

At which Isabel coloured and looked rigid, for she was known to have a not inconsiderable opinion of her powers of management and general capacity for ordering other folk's affairs.

She had held the management of her brother's house since she was a girl of eighteen—no older than May Charteris—and she was now twenty-four, and there was a large establishment and much society seen in that house. So perhaps Isabel had something to be vain of. Still she did not like to be reminded of it.

But as Wilford left her, and she had no answer ready if he hadn't, the subject perforce dropped.

All this occurred at Charteris Lodge, where Wilford and Isabel were staying, when the former fell before Sunbeam's unconscious prowess.

"Come here, Sunbeam," said Wilford, a day or two afterwards, "I want to talk to you seriously."

Sunbeam, flitting about the rose-garden, sprang like a deer up the terrace steps, and was caught in his arms. She stretched on tip-toe to put up her lips to his, like a veritable child. The top of her sunny head came up to his chin.

"Come into the garden, May—or Maud," said Wilford, smiling into the witching eyes, simply because you could not choose but smile at anything so lovely and winsome. "I want to have a serious talk with Sunbeam."

She made a moue.

"Serious! Oh, no, Wilford! I couldn't listen; I hate serious talk!" said she, making a little pas with her foot as she stood within his arm, and rippling over with laughter. "I like to look at your face, Wilford," putting up one hand to pass it down the outline of his straight features. "You're like a statue, you know!"

He took and kissed the little hand.

"What nonsense you talk, humming-bird!" said he, half laughing, wholly admiring the pretty attitude of her head—on one side, with a critical look in her face. "You must try and be serious, dearest."

"Oh, dear!" with a sigh, and upward look from the little lady. "Well, I suppose, Wilford, if I don't try you'll pick me up and put me in your pocket!"

"I think I shall, fairy! So you had better come quietly."

She looked at him a second, as if some rather serious thoughts had come into her head; then laughed, and pulling herself away, sprang on before him, down the steps, through the rose garden to the lovely glades of parkland beyond.

"I shall call you Will-o'-the-Wisp among your other names," said Wilford, whose long stride soon caught her up. "Come and sit here on this bench, sweetheart, and listen to me!"

He seated himself, and imprisoned Sunbeam in his arms, where she rested in tolerable quietness, twisting herself round to look up into his face.

"Because I must," said she. "Wilford, when we are married I shall do nothing but stare at you. Oh! I can't help it!" cried the girl, and threw herself across his breast in an ecstasy. "I love beauty, and colour, and light, and all that is lovely on the face of the earth. I love myself because I am beautiful, and Isabel was shocked; but you understand, Wilford?"

"My own child! Yes; but, dearest—"

"Ah! now don't tell me that beauty fades, and we get ugly and old," said Sunbeam, quickly. "You'll never, never be ugly, Wilford."

"Would you have loved me if I had been?" Wilford asked, half-wistfully.

"You wouldn't have loved me, sir, if I had been ugly!" laughed the girl, with a change of manner so rapid as to be almost startling. Could she really be serious for a minute together? "Now, what is it you're going to ask about, Sir Wisdom? I'm your prisoner, so I'll try and listen with the meekness becoming the future Lady Errol!"

CHAPTER II.

HER USE IN THE WORLD.

"Well, then, sweetheart," said Sir Wilford, putting back the sunny curls from the girl's forehead; "it is just about our marriage and subsequent ménage that I want your attention. You know my sister Isabel and my young brother Herbert have always lived with me. My home has been theirs, and there has been, in fact, no suitable home for Isabel but mine; and Herbert—well, dearest, he is not so very steady, so I thought it best for him not to live in chambers—"

"Not steady!" interrupted Sunbeam, with open eyes. "Why, I thought he was a banker or something horrid! Oh, Wilford, how proud you are!" cried the sprite laughing. "You coloured at that—don't deny it!"

"I detest that banking affair altogether, Sunbeam," returned her lover as he smiled at her; "but Herbert is only junior partner in the house and does very little at that either. It was a clause in my uncle's will that Hal was to go into the bank, so it had to be, else he would forfeit his share. He doesn't mind much," said Wilford, with a touch of bitterness; "but never mind that now, Sunbeam. What I want to ask you is this: Should you have any objection to Isabel and Hal being with us? It's not an arrangement one would choose; and if you have the slightest idea you won't like it, darling—"

"Oh, but why should I? It will be jolly," said Sunbeam. "If you like it of course I shouldn't mind. Isabel is huge fun!"

"Sunbeam! Sunbeam! you look on everything as fun," said Wilford, ever so little regretfully.

"Well, Sir Wisdom, how else shall I look on them?" said Miss Mischief. "You're the greatest fun of all; trying to lecture me and—caring for your little Sunbeam all the time so much that you can't. See, you are laughing now! Will Isabel keep house, order and say what you're to have for dinner and all that?"

"I thought you wouldn't care for that sort of thing, Sunbeam," said Wilford, "and Isabel likes it."

"It will be nice," said insouciant Sunbeam. "I know nothing about housekeeping, and I hate being domestic; and I like going about and dancing; and you'll take me about, won't you, Wilford?"

"Naturally, sweetheart."

"How nice we shall look together!" said Sunbeam reflectively. "I sometimes wish I could be some one else for a little time just to see how we should look!"

"What a queer little soul you are," said Wilford, with a laugh. "You can see that in a mirror!"

"Oh, but to see with other eyes! That's what I mean," said Sunbeam. "How funny to see oneself coming up a room! Oh! please, am I to be serious any more?"

"I can't find out that you've ever begun, you sprite," said Wilford smiling. "You didn't listen to me two minutes before you interrupted, and then you say 'it's fun' to have Isabel in the house. My own child," Wilford said, with real gravity and earnestness now, "I am not in the least sure you know what you are giving your consent to."

"What, about Isabel? Why, Wilford, do

you think I would drive your sister out?" said Sunbeam.

She didn't speak gravely or look grave, or anything serious at all, but Wilford caught her to his breast nevertheless, and covered the lovely face with kisses.

"My Sunbeam!" he said passionately, "will you ever know how much I love you?"

And a strange thrill went through Sunbeam, and she looked up straight into his eyes with scarcely a flush on her cheek, and then for some unknown reason hid her face against him, just for a few seconds, then lifted it and began to laugh.

"How can you care for such a silly little thing as I?" said she, naively. "What puzzles men are! You ought to fall in love with some one older and much more intellectual than I am, and you must go and—love me! I shall be no use to you—none at all!"

"Only be my Sunbeam!" said Wilford softly.

She lay quiet for perhaps a moment.

"Only your Sunbeam!" she said then, with a curious intonation that bewildered him. Then she drew herself from him and got up and walked away, and stood by a big rose-bush, with her back turned to him.

Wilford paused a moment, then sprang up and came to her side.

"My darling," he said, tenderly, "what is it I have said—what—"

But Sunbeam suddenly burst into a passion of tears, and threw herself on his breast and, startled as he was by this strange, new mood, Wilford only strove to soothe her, and in a very few minutes the sun shone out again, and the rain had ceased.

"Why did you cry so, my heart?" whispered Wilford, softly.

"I don't know"—and indeed she did not. "I told you I was a silly little thing; but," she said, with a strange wistfulness, and her brown eyes got that luminous look. "If I cry, Wilford, I shall lose the only use I have in the world."

"What is that, darling?"

"Why, just to be your Sunbeam," said the girl, and suddenly sprang away through the garden.

CHAPTER III.

"YOUR WIFE—YOUR SUNBEAM."

WHEN Sir Wilford asked Sunbeam when the marriage was to take place she only laughed and said "when he liked."

"It's great fun getting married, isn't it?" she said, roguishly.

"I can't speak from experience, humming-bird," returned he, gravely. "I expect you'll get fun out of it—out of this, too."

He put a golden basket into her hands.

"Jewels!" she said, in a breathless way, and sprang to him, and kissed him in her fervent, childlike way. "Oh, Wilford!"

She took the jewels out—a superb necklace of three rows of diamonds. He watched her with a curious eagerness, questioning wistfulness, watched her rapture. She held them up to the light, stood speechless, as they sparkled and scintillated, and gave back rainbow rays.

"Oh, how lovely!" she said. "Clasp them on me—you, Wilford—not I," and drew him to look in the mirror at her reflection. "Isn't it lovely!" she said, quite softly, but with sparkling eyes. "Wilford, are these to wear on the wedding-day?"

"Will you, sweetheart?"

"And no other jewels, Wilford—only this that you gave me?" said Sunbeam, smiling. "Now you may take them off—no, let me put them in the basket. I love to see them undulate like that. So now they'll stop there till I wear them—then—"

So this Sunbeam danced through all the wedding preparations, finding an intense joy in all the lovely things prepared for her, and driving Isabel out of her wits with perplexity at her singular "vanity" she must call it.

"I can't make you out, child," she said once. The wedding-gown lay on a sofa, its soft, shining folds hanging in exquisite drapery, and Sunbeam had taken up the train and was stroking the smooth surface with a sort of fondness, watching the light on it as she held it in different positions.

"Are you really admiring that in an abstract way?"

Sunbeam smiled.

"This?" she said. "Oh, no, not quite; it's a wedding-gown!"

"Well, what difference does that make? When you were petting that lace the other day you said it didn't matter who wore it, it would give you pleasure all the same."

"Yes; but then it wasn't this," was all Sunbeam could answer.

"Then it is vanity, May?"

At which Sunbeam had sprung at her sister-in-law, overwhelmed her with an embrace, and said she was terribly vain, silly, fly-away. Wilford would have enough of her. All of which rather matter-of-fact Isabel took *au sérieux*, and sighed for her brother's future.

Hal was simply enchanted with his new sister's beauty, but to Isabel, whose special pet he was, said rather contemptuously,—

"She's a perfect little fool, and Wilford's just infatuated. It does seem hard to lose one's chances for a frivolous little inanity like that!"

"But, dear, Wilford would have married anyhow some time."

"I'm not so sure. He likes such a porcelain doll as that. She's awfully lovely, of course; but I fancied Will might want a little more brain than that feather-headed child."

"How are things going with you, Hal?" asked his sister, and Hal looked gloomy.

"Oh, deucedly!" said he. "Will keeps one so infernally short. Perhaps he'll be in a good humour now, and give me a cheque. All those jewels he's given Sunbeam! Bless my soul! they'd sell for thousands."

"She'd never give them up if her husband was starving," said Isabel bitterly. It's sickening to see her insatiable vanity, and then Wilford says indulgently, 'Oh she's only a child, and it's beautiful things she loves! If she is a little extravagant, and a trifle foolish in her way of expressing her joy, it is very pretty folly, and will pass.'"

"Just like Will," said his brother, with a laugh. "Tender-hearted chap he is. Wouldn't have borne with me so long if he hadn't been," said Hal, who thought it a dispensation of Providence this tender heart of his brother's, and therefore he need not be grateful for it.

No one could make out that Sunbeam was serious, even on her wedding-day. She was bright and flushed, and sparkled like her diamonds, which the foolish little thing kissed before she put on. Whether she had the least idea of the responsibility she was undertaking was a mystery—probably not. She wasn't nervous; she didn't cry nor look pale, but radiant; and as she approached the bridegroom, as he stood awaiting her at the chancel steps, she actually looked up into his eyes and smiled. But he knew that her hand did tremble a little as he held it, but clasped his so clingingly, nevertheless, and he saw what no one else did when she said, "I will," that her eyes got that luminous look, which he understood if no one else did, he thought.

Did she feel the parting from her father—her friends? Would she cry when her father held her to him and kissed her so tenderly, his motherless child, who had been his Sunbeam too, and who he was sending now away to shine in some one else's home? She was quite still in his arms, and was a little pale, when Wilford quietly called her, and said they would be late for their train.

But the next minute she was smiling at the showers of rice and the farewell snippers, and said, regally, to her husband,—

"I said it was great fun being married, didn't I?"

But she was a bewildering little thing after all; for in the train, when Wilford drew her

to him and called her softly "his darling wife," all of a sudden, as she had done in the rose-garden, she pulled herself away and walked right to the far window of the saloon, with her face turned from him.

"Your wife, Wilford. I am your wife," he heard her say, as he approached her, in a half whisper, and she had a strange look—not fear, but awe—on her young face. And when he took her in his arms, she stood quite silent, with her head on his breast, her face hidden. When he whispered something, wondering what was passing in his mind, she only said, in a choked way, "Don't speak to me, just hold me—so."

So for more than ten minutes he held her to him, stroking her sunny curls; then at last she whispered, "Your wife—your Sunbeam."

Perhaps all that time she had been adjusting her place in the economy of nature, and had come to the conclusion that that was to be her use in the world—a dancing, brilliant Sunbeam, to deal out brightness with lavish hand and shine—just because a Sunbeam can't help shining!

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER THE HONEYMOON.

"It looks very pretty, but surely Wilford must tire of that sort of thing."

That was what Isabel was thinking as she sat at the library fire, with a book on her knee, but her eyes ever lifting with a sort of fascination to watch the two at the table.

Wilford was writing, or was supposed to be writing, but the process can hardly be continuous with a fairy perched on the arm of your chair, laughing and chattering, and disturbing you every minute.

He didn't seem to mind much. They were not long returned from the honeymoon, which, by the way, had extended over the winter months, abroad, and they found themselves in town in April for the season, fairly established in Upper Brooke-street, where, as heretofore, Isabel was the reigning genius of the household department.

"I leave the ornamental part to you," said she, to her sister-in-law, and Sunbeam seemed quite content.

"I'm thankful Wilford will get some dinners," said she: "not that he cares much, only I suppose he wants things to go somehow."

"They'd go 'somehow' with a vengeance with you at the helm," thought Isabel.

She did not love her little sister, had always a latent jealousy of her, and had not yet found out any of those hidden powers which Wilford declared to lie under the sunny curls of his "Sunbeam."

He, like all the rest of the world, could not but treat her as a precious treasure indeed, but a darling plaything, something to be sheltered from all worry, from the very "breath of heaven, if it visited her cheek too roughly."

Thus, she knew nothing of any sort of trouble with regard to Hal. She had no idea that Hal was wild, extravagant, ran through money like water, was always "sponging" on his brother, who, for the sake of the mother he had idolised, for the sake of Isabel, who was wrapped up in Hal, and for the sake of the old name of Errol, bore with him and strove to keep him within bounds.

He always smoothed away grave lines when Sunbeam came near, always was soft and indulgent to her, even when she was thoughtless and extravagant, as the little Lady Sunbeam was.

To-day she had perched herself on Wilford's arm-chair, and put her winsome face against his, with her arch smile and perfect confidence that she was never in the way.

She looked more perfectly lovely now than ever she had before; that was all the change in her, except that she wore a long tea-gown of cream silk and pale pink plush, with a stand-up ruff, and her curls sunning over her head in the old way.

"My Sunbeam!" Wilford said, fondly, and put an arm about her; "what does this coaxer want?"

"Oh! only to tease you a little," returned Sunbeam, audaciously. "I've been doing all the flowers, and putting a lot of my things, presents, in brackets, and—and now I've nothing to do."

"So you must come and tease me, sweet-heart! But I am writing."

"What are you writing?" said Sunbeam, peeping over. "Something for that tiresome old Review? Let me see! Take away your hand, Will. If we inquire a little further into the effect of— You can't get any further, Sir Wisdom, you see. You want me to help you."

"You, Sunbeam! Why, I can't write with you at my right hand like a sprite."

"Don't be so childish, Sunbeam," said Isabel suddenly, from the fireside. "How can Wilford write like that?"

Wilford looked up with a flash.

"Let the child be," he said, but more quietly than his eyes gave promise of.

Sunbeam's eyes danced with mischief.

"Poor old Iai!" said she. "She thinks me an awful plague; but I don't plague you, Wilford, do I?"

"No, my pet, never," said Wilford, tenderly. "I like to have you plaguing anyhow."

"How you spoil that child, Wilford," said Isabel. "It's quite ridiculous."

"Sunbeams can't be spoiled except by quenching their light, sister mine," remarked Wilford, and Sunbeam put in, laughing,—

"I'm not a child, I'm a matron, Isabel," at which assertion Wilford burst out laughing too, and Isabel held her peace, and Sunbeam was allowed to tease to her heart's content.

Wilford tried to write, but Sunbeam now read over, now suggested a word when he paused, now put her little soft hand on his, and, with any number of such tricks, took her right to plague.

"But, sweetheart!" remonstrated the victim, half laughing, just a little vexed, at which Sunbeam clapped her hands and laughed like a gleeful child.

"I have made you cross at Iai! Isabel! what fun! Wilford is vexed. And you said I never plagued you!" cried she, springing off her perch, and kneeling instead at her husband's feet. "Do penance, sir, for that—oram, and you shall kiss me as—penance."

"That is no penance, Sunbeam," said Wilford, smiling down into the lovely face lifted to his, and to which he gave not one but many kisses. "Now are you going to be a good child, and let me get on with this article?"

"Do you really want to, Will?"

"Honour bright, sweetheart. I promised it to-morrow, and you want to go to the opera to-night, don't you?"

"Oh, yes. I'm going to look lovely to-night, Wilford! Do come and see my gown; the colour is too lovely. Do come!"

An impatient move from Isabel.

Wilford smiled indulgently, and laid down his pen and rose.

"Come, then, sweetheart, and show me your wonderful toilette," he said, and Sunbeam danced off before him.

And Isabel covered her face, with angry tears in her eyes.

"Oh! how can men be such fools?" she said, through her teeth. "Little vain bundle of frivolity dragging a man of thirty off to see a gown! Bah! Wilford has gone mad, I think, over her lovely face."

"Hallo! Isabel," said Hal's voice at the door, and in lounged that young man, and threw himself in a chair; "what's up? my lady been restive?"

"Oh, Hal! it's you—I am glad!" Isabel said, and she dropped her hands with a glad light in her eyes. "No; to do her justice, May never asserts herself in my department. But—oh, Hal! Wilford has made a mistake, I'm afraid!"

"Well, if he don't see it that's his look-out. I'm not so sure of it, though. Anyway, why

do you bother your head about it? 'Tisn't your concern."

"It worries me, I can't help it," said Isabel. "She's been in here, playing childish tricks all the afternoon, just like a child of ten. Then he must see some gowns. Such nonsense!"

"'Tisn't the gown he goes for, my dear—it's the dear little girl who's to wear it! Why don't you try and teach her the way she should go—teach her how to order things and that?"

Isabel flushed and answered,—

"It would be more trouble than enough! She did try to take up a few things by way of a new fad, but I soon drilled that out of her. Fancy that child in the housekeeper's room!"

"I think she's fond of Wilford," remarked Hal, by way of saying something for poor Sunbeam.

"Do you think so? I don't. He's a new toy," said Isabel, with curling lip. "He indulges her, and gives her everything under the sun she wants. She declared she married him because they were both so handsome, and her style contrasted so splendidly with his, that abroad every one used to stare at the tall, statueque husband and the lovely porcelain tinted wife, 'just up to his chin.' All such rubbish she talks."

"She was poking fun, Isa; you are so matter-of-fact," said Hal, with a brother's frankness. "I've an idea she's fond of him in her way, anyhow. I want to see Wilford, by the way."

"He's taking her to the opera to-night."

"Oh, it'll do when he comes in. I want to talk to him," said Hal, gloomily, and beginning to walk up and down. "I'm deuced hard up."

"Oh, Hal! why don't you try and keep within bounds," said his sister, disturbed.

"Women don't understand anything about a fellow's expenses," returned Hal, half impatiently. "I lost a pot of money on those confounded races last week. Everything went wrong. I must settle up, and I haven't money to do it, that's a fact."

"Oh, Hal!"

"I made sure Devilshoof would win," said Hal.

"But you always make sure that your horses are going to win," remonstrated Isabel.

"Oh—well—it's all a chance in the racing world," said Hal, with a laugh. "Hush! here comes Wilford."

The two brothers greeted each other, Wilford with a softened eye for the younger.

"Back from the city, old fellow?" said he, and the younger answered,—

"Yes, glad enough to get away;" but he hadn't been to the city at all.

"What have you done with Sunbeam?" asked Hal, and Wilford laughed and said she was telling them to bring tea into the library—it was so "cosy," she said.

"Well, was the dress wonderful?" asked Isabel, with a flavour of sarcasm.

"Oh, yes—worth seeing," rejoined Wilford, gravely, "and my child's pleasure still more worth seeing."

"Over a gown?" said Isabel, with contempt.

"Why shouldn't a girl have pleasure over a gown, it's very innocent?" Wilford said, who generally managed to keep his temper over Isabel's strictures on his young wife. "Sunbeam has an artist's eye for anything lovely, whether it's a gown or a flower—that's all."

Sunbeam shining in, however, at this moment put a stop to attack and defence, and tea came in with her, and the conversation became general, Sunbeam sitting on a low stool at her husband's feet, with her sunny head on his knee, his hand over and anon caressing her curls.

Even that was an offence to Isabel, who thought it "silly" and "childish."

On Wilford's return from the Opera with Sunbeam, and when she was just leaving to go

up to bed, Hal stopped Wilford and asked him to give him a quarter of an hour.

"All right, Hal," But Sunbeam, who was very quick, caught the slightest change of countenance with which it was said, and wondered why it was.

Wilford saw her to the door, kissed her softly, and watched the graceful, lithe form up the stairs, then turned, with a half smile and a half sigh, back into the dining-room.

CHAPTER V.

"I AM NO USE."

"WELL, Hal, what is it?" said Sir Wilford, coming over to the mantel-piece. He pretty well knew what it was.

"I'm in a deuce of a fix, Wilford, that's the truth," Hal answered. He did not beat about the bush, but went straight to the point; it was no good doing anything else with Wilford Errol.

"Well, what's the hole now?" asked the elder brother, quietly. "I think your normal condition, Hal, is being in a fix."

The other laughed. His sins sat lightly on his shoulders, and he had quite got to consider it was Wilford's duty to pick him out of the holes he got into.

"It's those confounded horses," he said—"the races last week. I haven't a cent to pay up my losses with, Wilford."

"You surely knew that before you laid your money on, Hal. You thought you were going to win naturally; but it's the merest gambling—on the chances. I'm pretty well sick of paying your debts, dear boy," said Wilford, leaning against the mantel-piece, "and that's the truth, if you want it."

Hal stared.

"You may stare your eyes out of your head, my boy," said the other, not at all unkindly; "but it's a fact all the same. You see, you don't pull up as you've promised time and again, and I can't go on for ever shelling out, especially now there's my wife to think of. There were her settlements and future contingencies to provide for, perhaps. You see, Hal, one has to be more careful with new responsibilities."

"You don't mind what you spend on your wife," Hal said, with some bitterness, and Wilford laughed. He was rarely angry with any one over small things, but looked at these in a cynical, philosophising mood.

"Dear boy," he said, "my wife is my wife. My money is my own to spend on her if I like—I am bound to keep her, for instance. Am I bound to pay, not your just debts even, but your wanton extravagances? Have you the right to ask it of me? I'm not a millionaire, you know."

Halbert sat down and leaned his head on his hand. He looked pale and haggard; this new view of the case and Wilford's marriage was a "facer."

"What is the immediate pressure?" Wilford asked after a minute.

"A matter of a thousand," returned the other gloomily.

"What business had you to chance losing so much, Hal? You knew you'd have to come to me?"

"Well, of course," said Hal, "I suppose so if I thought at all, but I never reckon to lose;—no fellow ever does."

Wilford turned and walked up and down the room a few moments; then pausing by Hal, he laid his hand on the younger man's shoulder.

"If I pay this, Hal, give you this thousand pounds, will you promise me to have done with the turf altogether? Racing is a pastime for rich men, not for moderately off ones; and though I'm rich enough I don't intend to pay for your pastime any more, do you see? I'll settle this once more. After this you've got to understand, my boy, that I do no more for you—absolute, remember."

Halbert looked up in his brother's face rather curiously the elder thought. He wished

to Heaven he could get rid of a curious distrust he had of the younger brother. There was always a lack of proper straightforwardness on his part—a sort of constitutional inaccuracy he supposed.

"Well I'll give it up," Hal said, "if you'll settle this time. I suppose it is different now you're married."

"And you must pull up, Hal, in a general way," said Wilford, "You're twenty six; it's time a fellow has done with his ding. Sow the last of your wild oats, and sow corn instead. You've money enough, if you weren't so deuced extravagant, to marry on, and be comfortable. Well, you'd better turn in, old man, and get to sleep. I'll see you to-morrow," said Wilford, quitting his easy position and stretching himself. "It's past one; I'm going up, so can you."

He turned out the lamps, lighted his brother's candle and gave it him, and the two brothers went up to their rooms.

It scarcely occurred to Hal to even thank his brother for his generosity. What he thought of was his brother's new crochets of not being quite so generous as heretofore, all because he had taken unto himself a wife.

That same little wife said to Wilford the next day,—

"Wilford, why did you look different when Hal asked to see you last night?"

"How did I look different, my Sunbeam," asked Wilford, smiling at her.

"Oh, as if you were vexed. I thought why are you vexed with Hal! Because he is in a bank?" said Sunbeam laughing.

"No, sweetheart, he can't help that, but you mustn't worry this curly head about such things; you mustn't have any worries at all, darling!" said Wilford softly, and Sunbeam nestled to him but without a laugh or a bright smile or look.

"You all try and keep everything disagreeable from me," she said, with a little sigh; "every one did at home. That's what makes me so childish. Wilford, I wish—" she stopped, and her soft fingers travelled up his watch-chain and down again.

"What do you wish, dearest?"

She suddenly threw her head back on his breast.

"I wish," she said, vehemently, "that something might happen, some dreadful calamity, that I might show you how—how I love you, Wilford."

And when she had said it she buried her face against him, quivering. What a strange mixture of passionate feeling and childish superficiality she was! Wilford was startled. A kind of dread shook him.

"My darling!" he said quickly, "don't talk so—don't wish anything like that—what need. Do I not know you love me, dearest?"

"But I do nothing for you, and I am thoughtless, and I love pretty things and Isabel says I am frivolous and I tease you," said the lovely penitent, half in tears, half with laughter. "You pet me, and never mind anything I do or say, and I'm no use."

"My dear child! I love you just as you are," Wilford said tenderly. "Sunbeam, troubles come fast enough, without you're wishing for them! Love you as I will, my child, I can't keep the door shut on them always for you."

"Would you tell me, Wilford, if you had any trouble?" said Sunbeam wistfully.

"Why should you be made sad?" Wilford asked. "I could not see this dear face other than bright; you are a sunbeam, sweetheart. That is a good mission in life to have, isn't it?"

"Y—yes," said Sunbeam, soberly. She stood twisting her wedding ring round and round; then said, with bent head and dropped eyes, "but, Wilford, when we were married I said 'for better for worse, for richer for poorer.' Don't you see, if I am nothing but just a bright little butterfly thing, I can't be a real wife to you!"

Wilford drew her close to him and kissed the soft lips that spoke so wistfully.

"You are only made for sunshine, my heart," he said very tenderly. "If trouble comes, dear, you will be always still my Sunbeam. Then don't trouble this head of yours any more, sweetheart; sing and dance and be happy; that is all you have to think of now."

So they all combined, one out of love, another out of carelessness, another out of jealousy and contempt to put poor little Sunbeam in her place. She concluded with a sigh that must be all she was good for, "to sing, and dance, and be happy."

She was Wilford's darling and delight; his pleasure seemed to be in humouring every whim, in giving her all manner of beautiful things, jewels, and gowns, and flowers, and art works that she loved. She was always bright and smiling, nothing ever put her out of temper, and Isabel's quiet hectoring never seemed to worry her. No one could guess the amount of heroism hidden under that bright sunny head of the young wife who began dimly to see that she wasn't head of her own house, and that Wilford seemed to prefer to have it so.

If Wilford wished it, there was nothing more to be said. She was to be his Sunbeam, and so she made up her mind to be just that. She said once to Isabel, ever so little timidly,—

"Don't you think, Isa, you could teach me a little what to do in a house, because, you know, when you marry, I suppose I shall have to order and all that, and I shall feel so at sea."

"Oh, my dear, you'll never do anything of that sort," said the sister-in-law, with that kind of good nature which is harder to stand than sharpness. "You must have a lady housekeeper then, and Wilford doesn't want you to be bothered. Think about your dressing and going out, May; that's all you're fit for, you sunny little thing."

And Sunbeam had half thought of appealing to Wilford, but recollected it might make mischief, and then Wilford certainly would rather everything went smooth.

But Isabel's presence in the house sometimes oppressed the girl, she hardly knew why; and then Wilford looked worried, sometimes anxious, and once or twice she was shut out of the library when he was there with Isabel. She never showed how wounded she was, but always met Wilford with the same bright smile and sunny humour.

He wondered vaguely now and then, with a quite unreasonable disappointment, whether she had as much heart as he had believed.

She never noticed that he seemed graver than usual at times, but was quite the same light hearted Sunbeam, shining and shining till he must shine too for very sympathy.

Wilford forgot that he himself had contributed to limit Sunbeam's sphere. She was only good to shine, and so she shone "with unexhausted store;" and Wilford, with the usual blindness of his sex, thought she wanted nothing more than plenty of love and petting, and pretty things and admiration, to make her happy. Yet, he said, with a sigh, he had used to think there was so much more in her.

Sunbeam was a perfect success in society, and she revelled in the brilliant scenes in which she was called to take part.

Lady Errol was quite the sensation of the year, and Wilford was immensely proud of her, and was seen about with her everywhere. Perhaps, if he had been less taken up with his wife, he would have seen that things weren't going just right with Halbert, and would have noticed signs that now passed unheeded by him. But he was anxious about Hal, and, though he always meant to speak to him and get an idea how things were with him, he put it off from time to time.

Sunbeam claimed his time and devotion, and so the season was slipping by.

The Derby, Ascot, came and went, and Wilford was talking about taking Sunbeam to Goodwood, and then going down to Lang-

colme, his place, and then abroad, perhaps, as she liked. But all these fine plans were not destined to ripen into maturity.

CHAPTER VI.

A CRASH.

"MR. DENNY, Sir Wilford, is in the library, and wishes to see you on business," said a footman to Errol, one evening.

Mr. Denny was one of the senior partners in the bank of which Halbert was a junior, and Wilford glanced up. He was on the point of going to dress for dinner, after which he was to take his wife to a reception, and look in on a ball.

"What a bore!" said he. "What can he want. I believe it's Halbert he really wants, and I have to do duty while Hal's away. I'll come, Richard."

"Don't let him keep you, Wilford," said Sunbeam, springing after her husband, and she patted her curls and smiled.

"No, sweetheart," he said, "I won't let him keep me."

Then he went down and entered the library.

"How do you do, Mr. Denny," he said, shaking hands with the elderly banker, who rose as the other came in, and looked any where but at Sir Wilford.

"You've come to the wrong man for business, I'm afraid," said Wilford, laughing. "Pray be seated; my brother knows more about it than I do."

"Ah—ahem!" Mr. Denny cleared his throat and fidgeted nervously. "I am afraid, Sir Wilford, your brother is not in a position to be of much use to us. It is, in fact, about him that I came to see you—very painful business—very painful to communicate to you!"

Wilford leaned back, folding his arms across his breast; he had grown pale to the lips.

"Be so kind as to tell me your business, Mr. Denny," he said, putting a strong pressure on himself, "however painful."

Mr. Denny looked at him earnestly, coughed, and grew more and more nervous.

"Bless my soul!" muttered he, "it's the very deuce to tell a man."

Then he gathered courage and said, though he spoke with evident difficulty,—

"This concerns your brother, Sir Wilford. During his absence we have made the very painful discovery that a series of defalcations, extending over several years, have been perpetrated by your brother, bonds to the amount of several thousands have been abstracted, and I grieve to say, just before Errol went away a large sum was withdrawn from your current account, presumably by your cheque, but I greatly fear—" He paused, for Wilford sat rigid, one hand now over his eyes, the other clenched on his knee.

The damp was on his forehead, his blood was gathering chill around his heart. Calamity—dire disgrace—falling—falling on all who bore the name of Errol.

"Have you the cheque?" he said, in a very level voice, hardly raised above a whisper, and Denny handed him one. "It might be my own hand," Wilford said, bitterly. "Where did the boy learn the trick of the pen so dextrously? But I drew no cheque for such a sum. How was it no one thought it strange I should draw such a large amount? above any that I usually require?"

"Well, you see, Sir Wilford, one never knows. We all know there are great expenses, and Lady Errol—ladies are very extravagant sometimes," returned Mr. Denny, with a half apologetic smile. "We can't question a cheque if it looks genuine."

"No, no, of course not; but my own money, that is, so far as loss goes, the least part of it," Wilford said, in a suppressed way. Then he rose and walked through the room with his hand on his forehead.

"I can hardly take it in yet," he muttered.

"I can't think—Hal—that Hal should do this thing. But there must be some mistake."

He said the last words aloud, half turning to the banker, who shook his head sadly.

"My dear Sir Wilford, there is unfortunately no mistake. Your brother—inquiry before I would speak to you has shown—was deeply in debt; losses on the turf, gambling debts, and others more pressing on him, he became desperate. I find he paid up these before leaving, and you may guess this was, in point of fact, a flight."

Wilford came up to the table; his face was white and set, and he spoke with a sort of suppressed passion.

"Look here, Mr. Denny," he said, "I will make good every farthing of this money, bonds, securities—whatever they are—the owner shall not lose. If it can be kept from public disgrace—it must be. I care not if it costs me all my fortune—it shall be done."

"It wouldn't cost you that, Sir Wilford. But do you know it will make a large hole in it?" said Mr. Denny, impressively. "I suppose you know that Mr. Errol's own share is long ago forestalled?"

Wilford fell back.

"No," he said, with white lips. "I did not know it."

There was a moment's silence, the younger man battling for the self-control he would not yield up, and succeeding in, so far as he was able, to speak more calmly.

"Tell me what sum—if you can—would cover all deficiencies, both of the bank and these bondholders," he said.

"Well, my dear Sir Wilford, it will run you into between thirty and forty thousand pounds altogether; and then I don't know that you can stop the bondholders from prosecuting."

"I make everything good," said Sir Wilford, "only on condition that the whole thing is kept a secret. Not unless—no one has any claim on me. What I do I do simply to save my brother from disgrace, the name I bear from public shame. I can raise that sum anywhere in the City and settle everything at once. The owner of these bonds will be a fool if he refuses to be paid in full rather than forego the poor satisfaction of putting my brother in prison. You understand, Mr. Denny. I will come down to-morrow with my solicitor."

"It is making an enormous sacrifice, Sir Wilford," Mr. Denny said, tentatively. "Pray forgive me. You, I know, do not understand much about business. You will be crippled for years!"

"I know, I know," Wilford said. He put his hand a moment over his eyes, his thoughts going to that young wife of his. She seemed so little fitted to bear the least reverse, the least diminution of those luxuries she had been lapped in from her cradle. Then he dropped his hand. "Is there any sacrifice too great to save honour?" he said, and Mr. Denny shrugged his shoulders slightly. Perhaps he looked at things with a different eye from the bearer of this proud name of Errol.

"Believe me," he said, "it has been the most painful task I ever had to perform. I am very grieved," said Mr. Denny, as he rose, and Wilford, bowed in silence, gave his hand to the banker, who clasped it warmly. "Good-bye, Sir Wilford," he said. "You will see me then to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, yes," Wilford answered.

He saw Mr. Denny himself to the door, then turned back to the library. He almost staggered as he reached the room again, and flung himself down into the chair by the table, bowing his head down on his arm. He had kept up before a comparative stranger. No eye should see his agony, his humiliation. But now—alone—the strain must snap, and Wilford could not but give himself up for a space to the overwhelming sense of such utter anguish as had never yet poured on him.

For this was shame and disgrace—only to be hidden from the eyes of the world at the cost of a sacrifice he had deemed but little if

he alone must have suffered. And there was the betrayal of his trust, the base ingratitude that had traded on his affection.

For years Halbert had told him half-truths, had sworn such and such sums would clear him, when they did not half meet his needs. What a life was that which his brother had led! And Wilford blamed himself too, that, in these last months he had been so taken up with his young wife that he had paid but little heed to his brother. Yet, what had it availed?

Only a few short weeks ago Hal had told him a thousand pounds would clear him—a lie! At the very moment he knew that his debts must amount to many times that sum!

At first Wilford could only think of the misery of disgrace, of failure, the bitter wound to his love for his brother. Then it came to him how Isabel would take this—for Hal was her favourite. Then Sunbeam! How could he tell her? How drive the sunshine from her eyes? How tell her she must forego this or that for the sake of—his brother? Would she understand? Would she not be wretched—his darling, whom he would fain shelter from every adverse wind?

He did not hear the door open, so lost in his woful thoughts he was, but started up blankly at the sound of Isabel's shocked voice.

"Wilford! what has happened? What is the matter? I came to see if Mr. Donny had gone—we are waiting, Sunbeam—"

"She mustn't come, she mustn't know," Wilford cried, and sprang to the door and locked it. "Isabel! for Heaven's sake, let us keep it from her. She cannot bear trouble—go tell her." He stopped, choking, and clasped his hands over his eyes.

"My child! my child!" he said, and bent like a reed before a stormwind.

A kind of bitterness, and yet of triumph, flashed up in Isabel's eyes.

"There is trouble then?" she said, "Well, I am strong. I can bear it, and help you. What shall I tell Sunbeam?"

"Tell her," Wilford half whispered, "I—I am busy. I can't come in to dinner, nor go out to-night. I can't see her; she would see something wrong, my poor child! Then come to me, Isabel."

His sister left the room and went up to the drawing-room. Sunbeam was there, softly singing to herself. Her utter unconsciousness stirred Isabel's heart to pity.

"May, dear!" said she gently, "Wilford asked me to tell you he is too busy to come to dinner, and would you mind excusing him to night?"

Sunbeam looked blank.

"Oh!" she said, "it's that horrid bank! Hal being away, they come and bother Will! Then I can't go to-night? I did so want to go to the ball! I'll go to Wilford. I know I'll get him to relent."

She was dancing off, confident in her powers, when Isabel stood in the way.

"Nonsense, May! How can you be so stupid and selfish?" said she. "Wilford doesn't want to be worried."

"Why? Is anything the matter?" said Sunbeam quickly.

"No, no, nothing! Only, don't you know yet, man never like being bothered when they're busy? Wilford said you weren't to come," concluded Isabel, drawing on her imagination.

"But you!" Sunbeam said. There was a queer tightness at her throat.

"Oh, I can help him! I understand about bank things. Now go and have dinner, there's a good child, and please send in something for Wilford, will you?"

"Yes," Sunbeam said mechanically. She came back into the drawing-room; and Isabel, satisfied with herself, left the girl and returned to the library.

And while Wilford was telling her of the calamity which had fallen so suddenly, and Isabel listened like one turned to stone, his young wife came down quietly to the dining-

room, bade the footman take such-and-such things to the library for his master, made a pretence of eating, then came back to the drawing-room and sat in the growing darkness forlorn and wounded to the soul, on into the night. Upstairs in her room lay the ball-dress, the sparkling jewels, she had thought of with such joy—but she remembered nothing of these now. Wilford had shut her out. She felt something was the matter, and Wilford had said she was not to come. He turned to his sister, not to her.

She was not his wife, but only his toy. She was no use but for sunshine hours; and if there came haply a dark hour, what was she there for? One by one the tears gathered and fell—and Sunbeam—a sunbeam no longer—sat crouched up in the darkness. And no one came to comfort her, or seemed to remember she might want a sunbeam to pierce her soul, from which the sun had all faded.

CHAPTER VII.

"TO SHINE AND SHINE, WITH UNEXHAUSTED STORE."

It must have been near twelve when Isabel came upstairs, moving quietly and calmly across the drawing-room, which was almost in darkness.

"May," she said, "are you here? Why, child, sitting in the dark?"

Sunbeam rose from the big chair where she had been crouching, stretching up her white arms, with a half laugh. She was not going to let Isabel see her hurt.

"Why, I do believe I fell asleep!" said she, suppressing a yawn. "What o'clock is it? Is Wil coming up?"

"No, child; it's twelve. He says you are to go to bed. I'm going too. He has got a lot to do yet. He'll come presently. I'm just going to tell Richard he can go. There's no one out."

"But is Wilford going to sit up all night?" said Sunbeam. "Isabel, I'm sure there is something the matter."

"There isn't! Don't be silly, May, Wilford will come presently," returned Isabel, decidedly. "He won't like it if you don't go up, May!"

"Oh, I'm going," returned Sunbeam, "I'm much too sleepy to sit up for him. Good night!"

She gave a cheek, that struck Isabel as cold, to her sister to kiss; then went off to her room.

"She doesn't care," said Isabel, bitterly; "else she wouldn't curl up like a kitten and go to sleep like that."

Sunbeam, however, was not sleepy, and she had no intention of going to bed. She let her maid put her on a dressing-robe, and sent her away, saying she was going to sit up a little.

"Has Miss Errol come up yet?" she asked, and the maid answered, "Miss Errol had. Her light was out, and her door locked."

"I wonder when he is coming!" thought Sunbeam, as the minutes lengthened out; the quarters struck, and at last one o'clock, a quarter, half-past one.

"Is he ill—can it be!" Sunbeam whispered. She grew white, and rose up, her heart beating fast.

She was half afraid of her own temerity, for she was a timid little thing about asserting her claims to his love. She knew she was wrapt up heart and soul in her husband, but she wasn't so sure of him. He loved her—ah, yes, that she knew—passionately worshipped her—but was she needful to him? Did he always want her?

She stood pushing her hand through her curls with an anxious perplexed look, and then made a sudden movement, went to the door, opened it softly, and looked out.

The gas burnt dimly on the stairs still; and the girl, with her light, noiseless step crept down, now flushing a little and now going pale.

At the foot of the hall-stairs she paused. The library door was opposite to her. Suppose he had locked the door, would he be vexed at

her coming—think she was frightened to be alone, and so set her further back into her child's niche?"

"But I am his wife," she said, softly, with a little thrill, "and I must be brave."

She went forward then, and noiselessly turned the handle. The door yielded. With throbbing pulses Sunbeam went in, closed it, and stood in her husband's presence, her heart in her mouth. For he sat there by the table, his head on his arms, his very attitude so instinct with suffering that, little as Sunbeam knew of such signs, her very quickness of sympathy told her there must be something terrible to bend Wilford so.

It held the girl still for a moment. She was awed and afraid, not confident enough of her own powers to know what she should do; but either he heard the faint signs of a presence, or knew some one was there by some subtle sense, for he lifted his head, and started to his feet as he saw her.

"Sunbeam!" he said, with a half cry, "you here?"

He made a step towards her, and opened his arms, and then Sunbeam sprang to him and flung herself on his breast, clinging convulsively to him, silent and quivering, choking back tears—for she would not cry—she must not worry him with tears.

And Wilford held her close to him, with Heaven knows what rush of joy, of rest, of an intense sense of communion and sympathy, and bowed his head to hers, yet, all the while with bitter self-reproach for feeling that joy in her being here. She must not be troubled. She must be kept from all sorrow. How selfish it was to be glad she came to him.

"My Sunbeam!" he said, softly, at last, and raised his head only to press his lips to her curls, "you ought to be in bed and asleep long ago."

"I couldn't sleep," she whispered. "You told me to go, but—I couldn't rest. I—Oh, Wilford!" with a burst of passionate tears that quite startled him; "I know there is some trouble; and you shut me out, and think I am too childish to know—to care. You mean to be kind—but, oh, don't you see you are breaking my heart?"

Startled, indeed, to the soul, Wilford, in bitter trouble, pressed the quivering form closer yet.

"My child! my own child!" he whispered, brokenly. "Don't sob so, my Sunbeam! I thought only to save you from sorrow, to guard you from suffering. Believe that, my darling! my poor little Sunbeam!"

But it was some minutes before Sunbeam, heroic little thing that she was, could struggle back to quietness, and then she reproached herself bitterly for having given way.

"It was wrong of me to cry," she said, almost whispered. "And you are in trouble. You see, perhaps it is true, I am too childish to be any use."

"No, no; you mustn't say that, darling!" interrupted Wilford, with passion. "Sunbeam, when I looked up and saw you—ah, you don't know the warm stream that seemed to go right through my heart, through every vein; the joy to see you, to hold you in my arms, to remember your love! You can comfort me, Sunbeam; I know it! I know it!"

A smile like a veritable sunbeam broke over the girl's face.

"Can I, really, Wilford?" she said, softly, looking up into his face, and he, with a blinding mist before his eyes, just dropped his head to hers, and so stood quite silent, in some sort clinging to her.

"I have been very cruel to you, my Sunbeam!" Wilford whispered, quite brokenly; then, "I didn't know. I meant to be kind!"

"Dearest!" the girl said, softly, "I know that; and, indeed, it was all my fault, because I am so light-hearted. And now should you think that your little Sunbeam could ever want to do anything but dance through life. See, now, Wilford," said Sunbeam in her pretty, caressing way, "I can be a real Sunbeam

now. If I give only light, you know, that is only part of a sunbeam's duties. Sun gives warmth, and a little strength perhaps, too," Sunbeam said, as if for her to give strength to this strong husband of hers seemed rather a bold statement; and Wilford could not but smile at her loving simplicity. "And it was so good of you, Wilford, to want to spare me; but, dearest, may I say something?"

"All that is in your heart, my child!" Wilford said, tenderly.

He looked with a sort of awe on this transfigured sunbeam of his, into those eyes so luminous, so soft; into this young face so bright yet so strangely shaded off from its light-hearted brilliancy by the new power that had come into it.

"It made me so unhappy," Sunbeam went on, drooping her head, "to think I was only good for sunshine hours; and, Wilford, I don't think it was jealousy; but," she hid her face, "Isabel," she whispered. "She is your sister, and you love her. She seemed to—to take my place. You turned to her this evening. She told me you said I wasn't to come."

She stopped, and Wilford, stroking the dear head against him, said tenderly,—

"I have been wrong, my own darling! It was my love for you that would fain shelter you from a breath of sorrow; and I have given you sorrow in my very desire to spare you. Forgive me, my precious child! I will never so wound you again! You seem such a child to take up the burden of life, my Sunbeam!"

"Oh! no, no! I am foolish, and like a child, Wilford, I know, often," Sunbeam said, wistfully; "but, still, a woman, not very wise or intellectual, but able to bear anything to help you, if I can only do it by loving you, Wilford!"

"My Sunbeam!" Wilford said, and kissed the soft lips that pleaded so with a passion of love and tenderness. "I think there is more wisdom hidden under those sunny curls of yours than some of us have guessed at."

He laid both hands lightly on her forehead, pressing her head a little back.

The look he gave her took her breath, and made her flush and tremble.

He half smiled.

"Come then, my wife," he said, softly. "I am going to make you sharer of my sorrows as well as of my joys. Come here at my feet," seating himself in a low chair, "and let me hold you to my heart so."

And so, nestled into his arms, the girl—with a strange bewilderment of happiness underlying all the sadness for his sorrow, listened while he told her, with bent head, of the dishonour his brother had brought on his name—of all that dishonour entailed.

"On you, too, my darling!" Wilford said, and Sunbeam laid her face against his without speaking, only her touch and her clinging kiss gave him comfort.

She was a wise little girl after all, and knew in some wonderful way when to speak and when to be silent.

"For, Sunbeam," he went on, after a minute or two, "I am going to make all this money good to save Hal and our name from public disgrace; and that means, dear, that we shall have to do without many things that you have always been used to."

"Will you have to put down your horses, and go without cigars, and clubs, and all that?" said Sunbeam, wistfully.

Wilford smiled a little, and put her curls back fondly from her forehead; her first thought was for him.

"What of your victorias, and your horses and new gowns, and jewels, sweetheart?" he said, "that, perhaps, you may have to do without?"

"Oh! but that doesn't matter," rejoined Sunbeam, brushing aside these sacrifices as of no moment at all. "If I don't have anything like that, and go about in oaks, perhaps you could keep your horses, couldn't you, Wilford?"

The man's lip quivered. It was a little time before he could speak.

"You will make me very selfish, dearest!" he said. Then, rather huskily, "Perhaps it may not come to doing without a horse or two; but what I mean is, Sunbeam, we shall have to make serious retrenchments in the establishment, do with fewer servants, must give up our winter abroad, for instance, and perhaps stay quietly at Langholme instead of having a season in town, let this house and have a house near, but not right in the midst of everything, not give big entertainments, not have everything we want just because we want it, and so on. It will be difficult and disagreeable, Sunbeam."

"You won't mind much if your Sunbeam is shining all the time, will you?" said Sunbeam, brightly.

"It's for you I mind, dearest. What are you looking so grave about?"

"I was thinking, Wilford, wouldn't my jewels bring a great deal of money?"

"You wouldn't like to part with them, Sunbeam, would you?"

She glanced up under her lashes, then bent her head on his shoulder.

"It would be for you," she said, simply.

"My darling!" Wilford pressed his lips to hers, "a true woman's answer. But, sweetheart, I don't think that will be needed. I want you to keep those."

"But, Wilford," the girl interrupted with great earnestness, "you mustn't think of what I said as a pretty child's suggestion; I mean it all. Oh! I would be happy—happy," she cried, clasping her hands, "never—never to wear another jewel if I could help you a little!"

"I know it, my heart, rest content. I believe you would give the soul out of your own body for me, darling!" said Wilford, half sadly, "but I think we need not ask the sacrifice."

"And then, Wilford," the girl said, eagerly, "there are my settlements, couldn't I give those up?"

"You dear child! no. See, darling!" Wilford said, softly, and pressed her face against his breast, "you must remember that you enjoy only what is called the life interest of your settlements. The capital is for those who may, perhaps, come after you. It wouldn't be just to give up that even if you could."

"No!" Sunbeam said, under her breath, and was silent a little while.

"Then can't I do anything real?" she said, after that pause, with a sigh, "anything real I mean, Wilford?"

He smiled very tenderly.

"You can be my Sunbeam," he said, softly, and she flashed him such a look.

She understood now all that enclosed. Once before, when he had said that, she had gone away, and then wept a passion of tears on his breast; now she nestled down to him and repeated half to herself,—

"Your Sunbeam—your Sunbeam!"

"But," she said, after a long silence, "Wilford, I know what I can do. I can pay for all my own things, gowns and things, out of my own money always. That will be a real help, won't it? I must never ask you for anything."

"I shouldn't like that, sweetheart; but perhaps I shall be obliged to bear it," said Wilford, with a smile, "I like you to come to me for everything necessary."

"You like to spoil me," the girl answered with a touch of archness. Then, with a long sigh, "Wilford, if it wasn't for poor Hal, and all the misery he has brought on you, I could be glad that we have not so much money."

"Why, darling?"

"Because," said Sunbeam, "perhaps you would never have thought me anything but a very precious plaything. Now you know I am your real wife."

Wilford could only strain her to him with broken words and loving caress.

"But you will be my own bright, light-

hearted Sunbeam still?" he said, with a passionate wistfulness, and she smiled.

"I don't think I can help singing and taking things brightly, Wilford," she said, ever so little sadly. "Perhaps that may be better, because you are older and different, and can't be such a humming-bird, and you'll want me to make you happy."

"You do that, Sunbeam, by just living," said Wilford, and sat smoothing the soft hair from her forehead for a long time—a certain restful feeling coming over the restless agony that had clenched his heart before. He had not known himself how he had craved his wife's presence, her sympathy, her mere touch, all those long hours.

They sat far into the morning hours—sometimes silent, sometimes talking over affairs, he explaining many things which she did not understand, touching lightly on Hal's failings, she unconsciously in question or suggestion, showing him how much that was practical and clear lay "under those sunny curls of hers," till at last he said, she ought to get some rest.

"It isn't good for you my heart," he said, "to sit up all this time and have no sleep."

"If I had been at the ball," she answered, "I should have been just getting home."

"Very like, sweetheart, still, now you must sleep. I haven't any sleep in me, dearest."

"Don't send me away," whispered Sunbeam, tremulously. "Mayn't I sit here at your feet, and lay my head on your breast—oh, Wilford—indeed, I will try and sleep."

And so with his arms about her, her head resting on his breast, Sunbeam's white lids fell, the long lashes lay on her soft cheek. Like a child she slept, breathing so quietly he stooped once or twice, with that vague fear which seizes us sometimes, to feel her breath fan his cheek.

"My darling, my Sunbeam," he half-whispered, so very softly, "what a passionate heart lies here under all the pretty child's ways! What a woman's love and power and self-sacrifice! Darling Sunbeam!"

CHAPTER VIII.

It was understood in Society generally that Sir Wilford Errol had lost money somehow. It was supposed through the failure of some investment or other in which his uncle had left part of his fortune; and people wondered what that brilliant, light-hearted Lady Errol would do without any number of new gowns, and just whatever she fancied.

They need not have commiserated Sunbeam. She took everything with her usual brightness; it made no difference to her whether she had four carriages or one. Wilford had his horse, and so had she, but that was nothing, and if he drew it mild in cigars—not that he ever was a great devotee—she did not know it.

She was happy if he had all she thought necessary. When Halbert's affairs were got through, and all that he had abstracted paid up, Wilford found himself with a pretty heavy charge on his income, which was, in consequence, much reduced. Isabel was often moody and impatient over the necessary retrenchments. She was unhappy, and she was jealous of the position Sunbeam had taken with her husband. Not that Sunbeam, as heretofore, ever interfered with the house-keeping arrangements; less than ever, now the establishment was reduced, and a certain amount of economy necessary, was she able to conduct domestic affairs, and so she gave that meekly up; besides, she would not for the world hurt Isabel's feelings. Still she managed, in her pretty humming-bird way, to insensibly soften her sister-in-law, and get her to initiate her into some ways.

"So that I shan't be such an ignoramus," said she, "when some one we know of comes and fetches you away."

For certainly Laurence Brooke, who owned

most of the property that lay about Langholme, was inclined to carry Isabel away with him, and Isabel seemed nothing loth.

They spent a quiet autumn at Langholme. Wilford had not much heart for a great deal of gaiety and visiting, and he seemed just now to want very little but Sunbeam—she was sufficient. She never failed, was always the bright, loving, winsome fairy about the house, never too brilliant when too much brilliance would jar, never dull or moody or preoccupied—a veritable sunbeam.

"There's more in her than I thought," Isabel said once. It was after Christmas then, and Wilford was talking of going to town. It was terribly dull in the country for Sunbeam. "I used to misjudge her. She seems quite as happy without endless toilettes and admiration as with them."

"Sunbeam isn't vain," Wilford said, with a smile. "She loves beauty and lovely things just because they are lovely. She is the brightest spirit that ever lived. By the way, here is Hal's letter, Isabel. You can read it all. You see he seems to be pretty well settled on the rancho."

"I'm glad he is with Frank Hanley. He'll keep him steady," said Isabel. "Does Sunbeam know?"

"Yes, I told her. I think, Isabel, you'll have to give up the idea of going out to him. Here comes Brooke again up the drive," said Wilford, smiling, and laying his hand affectionately on his sister's shoulder. "I'm off to Sunbeam."

Isabel, if she coloured, made no demur. She was always self-possessed, and the panic that seizes some girls at the prospect of being left alone in front of a proposal was unknown to her.

But, presumably, Laurence Brooke did not find her cold or unresponsive, for, when Wilford returned with Sunbeam some time later, Isabel, looking very handsome with that flush on her cheek, was presented to her brother by a radiant young man who claimed her as his promised wife.

"Then," cried Sunbeam, joyously, later when they were alone, springing up and down, her hands on Wilford's arm just in her old child-way, "we shall have a wedding! Oh, what fun! Being married is great fun, Wilford," said she, nodding archly, and he laughed.

"I am glad you find it so, sweetheart," he said, putting an arm round her and drawing the bonny head down against him. "I think you find life 'great fun,' don't you?"

"Oh, yes, with you. Don't you?"

"With you, Sunbeam."

"Such a plague as I am?" said she, roughly. "And, oh, Wilford! when Isabel is married! The house, the servants, what shall I do? Won't things be sixes and sevens, and won't you say 'Really, Sunbeam, you must be a little more steady!' Don't laugh, Sir Wisdom. It's what'll happen."

"Not a bit of it, Sunbeam! I shall never 'growl' at anything you do or don't do! Besides, you must have a housekeeper to manage things for you. I won't have you worried with tiresome, household concerns."

"You extravagant Wilford! We can't afford it!" said Sunbeam, demurely, but he laughed and kissed her.

"Don't trouble your sunny head about that," said he. "I'll never smoke another cigar or wear another button-hole, then, if it can't be managed without—not that they cost such a lot, Sunbeam. It's only a manner of expression!"

"You mustn't be always trying to save me being what you call 'bothered,'" said Lady Sunbeam, stroking his hand softly. "You make me much—much too porcelain still, Wilford—"

"You are much—much too precious, my darling," Wilford answered her, tenderly, "to be treated altogether as common clay. You know your mission is to shine, sweetheart, isn't it?"

She looked up with that sweet, serious,

tender glance that made those brown eyes of hers look so luminous, and smiled as she laid her head back on his breast.

"Yes—to be—your Sunbeam," she said, softly, and he set his seal to that with his lips on hers.

[THE END.]

WILLIE'S PAINT-BOX.

BY DAISY EYEBRIGHT.

—O—

"PAPA! papa!" cried Willie Morton, loudly, as his father was shutting the front door. "won't you bring me a nice paint-box and a brush? You know I love to paint and draw, and the old one is all used up."

"I'll see about it," hastily replied his papa, as he hastened to catch his omnibus.

"Oh, Belle!" exclaimed Herbert, as he skipped up the front steps, calling to his little sister, who was in the hall. "papa is going to bring me a new paint-box and a brush, and I will paint you a dog and a cat, and lots of pretty things. I can colour some of the pictures in your Chatterbox, if mamma will let me do it. I know I can make them a great deal prettier than they are now. I'll make the dogs brown and white, like old Rover, and the cats maltese-colour, like your Minnet; and I'll paint the little girls all pink and white and blue, and dress up the boys just like me. Won't it be jolly fun?"

And Willie danced and pranced about so wildly that his mamma came downstairs to learn what made her child so joyous.

"Oh, mamma, mamma!" screamed both children together. "What do you think papa is going to buy us? A paint-box, and we are so happy we have to dance and sing."

"Bring you a paint-box?" said Mrs. Morton. "Are you sure that he will remember it?" for she knew from long experience that her husband's memory was rarely to be depended upon, and that he often promised to do many things which he never thought of performing.

"Oh, yes!" cried Willie. "He said, 'I'll see about it,' and I know he will bring it this evening, and I shall be at the door to meet him."

"Don't set your heart too much upon the paintbox," replied his mamma, "because your father has many things to occupy his mind, and very likely will not think of it again. You must learn, my dear, the maxim, 'Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed.'"

But Willie could not be expected to heed this old-time proverb; and the hours of the day dragged wearily, while his usual amusements found little value in his eyes. The express train that he used to load with blocks, and draw up to Belle's house—which he had built of sticks in one corner of the garden—and to unload with great delight, as barrels of flour and sugar, or boxes of tea and other provisions, stood neglected, and he watched both the sun and the clock on their daily rounds, wondering impatiently if half-past five would ever come.

In the afternoon his aunt Emily called in, and he related to her, with glistening eyes and rosy cheeks, his wonderful expectations, saying—

"Just think, Aunt Emily, papa is going to bring me a paint-box and a brush, and I am so happy that I can hardly wait for them to come. And I'll paint you a picture to hang in your own room. I'll paint dogs and cats, for you love them, you know; or else I'll paint little children, like Belle and me. Which should you like the best?"

and Willie jumped up and down in the highest glee, and would gladly have stood upon his head, had not his mamma objected seriously to such gymnastics.

Aunt Emily expressed great sympathy in his

joy at the anticipation of the new treasure, and said—

"Either picture would be charming, Willie. And if you and Belle will bring your hats we will walk down to a print-shop and buy a print of some little children, with a dog and cat, for you to colour for me."

So the happy children were soon walking down the street, skipping with glee at the thought of the enjoyment they would receive at the print-shop, and thinking of what pleasures the paint-box had in store for them.

The size of the box, and the numbers and colours of the paints, were also duly discussed; and Willie's ideas of dimensions were found to be so extravagant that Aunt Emily was forced to diminish them nearly three-quarters; but she did not detract anything from the boy's exuberant spirits.

As the omnibuses passed only in the evening Willie watched their coming most carefully, for he felt certain that his papa might possibly arrive an hour or two earlier on account of the importance of his errand; and when Aunt Emily had told him that it was surely a vain hope, and that papa could not come until the usual hour, he cried,—

"Why, Auntie, I know he will, for when Uncle James came home from America he came down with him at three o'clock, you know, and my paint-box is quite as important as Uncle James' coming."

At this sally Aunt Emily could not help laughing, which rather discomfited Willie, for, like many other children, he did not like to be laughed at, and it made him quiet for the space of three minutes; but little Belle filled up the interlude with expressions of her joy, and calculations of the wonders which her brother would perform with the much-desired paints.

The print-shop offered pleasing attractions for the children, and half an hour soon passed away while the prints were looked over, and the most suitable ones chosen.

It now lacked but half an hour of the long-expected time when Mr. Morton would return from the city, and as soon as they arrived at the gate Willie said,—

"Now, Auntie, I'll stay here and watch for that omnibus; and, if you please, you can carry in the pictures, and show them to mamma. You are good to buy them, and I'll make them just as pretty as I can. I think, though, I'll practice on some of our torn picture-books first, so that I can do them extra fine. Won't grandmother think I am a clever boy to make such pretty things?"

And he danced delightedly up and down the pavement, which greatly amused several passers-by.

So Aunt Emily, with little Belle, sought her sister's room, and displayed her purchases.

"You are very good, Emmie," said her sister, "to take so much trouble to please the children, but I really fear that Willie will be sadly disappointed, and scream, and that will displease his papa, you know. My husband has a very poor memory, and often forgets the commissions I give him. The phrase, *I'll see about it*, means to my ears, *I'll take no thought of it*. I tried to convince Willie this morning that there was little hope of his obtaining the paint-box; but he is of so sanguine a temperament that it produced no effect upon him."

"Ah, well," answered her sister, "perhaps on this occasion Dick may remember. He is very fond of Willie; and he is such an attractive, handsome child, that every one notices him. His head is noble, and his eye most accurate and discriminating. He selected all these prints, and they were the prettiest in the shop. Our little lad may be a great painter one of these days. Stranger things have happened."

She was interrupted by hearing Willie about—

"Papa is coming! papa is coming! I see the omnibus."

And, looking out of the window, they saw him rushing up the street to meet him.

His mamma and aunt, feeling interested in the paint-box, hastened downstairs, while little Belle was already at the front door.

"Where is my paint-box, papa? Please give me my paint-box, papa!" cried Willie, as he grasped his papa's hand, and jumped up and down in the excitement of the moment.

"Your paint-box, Willie!" replied his papa. "What do you mean? I haven't any paint-box."

"Why, papa," gasped out the boy, "you promised to buy me one; and Aunt Emily has bought me lots of pictures to paint, and I haven't thought of anything else all day long," and the child burst into tears.

"What a horrid noise that child does make!" exclaimed Mr. Morton. "I never promised to bring him a paint-box."

"Oh, yes you did, papa! You said 'I'll see about it,' and that is just the same!" sobbed Willie.

"No, indeed," replied his papa. "I did not say I would buy you one; and I never gave it another thought."

And Mr. Morton shrugged his shoulders at the sound of the boy's shrill cries, and with an air of indifference for his child's grief walked out into the garden at the back of the house, and began to gather pears from his favourite tree.

Willie threw himself upon the carpet of the sitting-room, and his whole frame shook with the agony of his grief, while his cries resounded through the house.

Belle also added her quota to the noise. In vain did their mamma and aunt strive to comfort them.

At length Mr. Morton returned from the garden, and said in tones of stern command,—

"Stop that crying at once, children!" Then, turning to his wife, he said, "I'd rather be in a bear-garden than in such a den as this! I come home from the city weary and exhausted with my day's work, and this is the comforting scene to which I am treated! It does seem, Mrs. Morton, as if you could have better discipline in your family! These children are enough to make a man insane!" And he caught up his hat, and, going towards the door, cried out,—

"You need not wait tea for me. I shall spend the evening in more agreeable society."

Mrs. Morton's face turned ashy pale, for she knew too well what society he would seek at the billiard table, and in what a state he would return home late at night, with his pockets emptied by the amusements in which he had been engaged. She sighed heavily as she lifted Willie from the floor—parting the matted hair which covered his brow, and kissing his disfigured cheeks, as she said, in low, coaxing tones:

"Willie is not mamma's darling when he cannot bear disappointment better than this, and makes papa leave us because he cannot endure to hear his screams."

"But he said he would see about the paint-box, mamma," sobbed the stricken child; "he said he would, and I thought it was a promise. Oh! dear, dear, dear! I have thought so much about it, and Belle and I were so happy!"

And again his sobs burst forth, and his whole form was convulsed with his childish grief.

Meanwhile Aunt Emily had coaxed little Belle up stairs, and was beguiling her grief with a wonderful story about a parrot.

It was a hard task for the mother to soothe the child, whose heart was so sorely grieved at his father's thoughtlessness. She, too, had experienced it early in her marriage life, and had learned not to expect any little pleasing remembrances or attentions from her husband, and also not to burden him with any commissions belonging to her household cares.

In her childhood's home her father had never been unmindful of his duties to wife or children, but was always desirous of ministering to their comforts and pleasures. But Mr.

Morton had not been trained in a similar school, and he never considered it his duty to burden his mind with the little trifling things which go so far toward completing the sum of woman's happiness.

When the children's grief had been hushed by sleep, Aunt Emily—who had remained to comfort her sister, but who had most wisely refrained from criticising her husband's behaviour—requested permission to purchase the coveted paint-box for Willie.

At first Mrs. Morton rather demurred at granting the request. She feared that her husband might object to it; but her sister's arguments finally prevailed, and she determined to allow her to gratify the child, even at the risk of his father's displeasure.

But Aunt Emily felt sure that Mr. Morton had paid so little heed to the matter, and was so utterly unconscious of the effect he had produced upon the child, that he would not consider her act as intended to rebuke him, but she said,—

"Do, dear Annie, tell Dick how injurious it is, to children especially, to partly promise to do something for them and then forget it entirely. You could surely make him understand what unhappiness such thoughtlessness causes to those he loves and cherishes."

Mrs. Morton listened to her sister's kindly advice attentively; but she knew her husband's disposition far better than her sister could, and was sure that any such attempt upon her part would only lead to a painful scene, for it would anger him, without convincing him that his conduct was not all that a husband's should be.

When Willie received the paint-box his eyes sparkled with pleasure, and his cheeks reddened with joy; yet there was a little sting in its possession. But he thanked his Aunt Emily heartily for her kindness, giving her a close embrace and a kiss as her reward, and, with the box hugged tightly under his arm, he darted away to find his sister and exhibit his prize.

When Mr. Morton saw it, he said,—

"Halloo! where did that come from, Willie? I don't think you deserved to have it, you screamed so horribly the other night. But your mamma and aunt are doing their very best to spoil you."

The colour mounted high on the boy's brow, but he made no reply; yet the way he set his lips tightly together showed to the observer that his little heart had not forgotten the chilling touch of disappointment.

By his friends Mr. Morton was considered an agreeable, kindly gentleman. Yet, as we behold him, he was selfish, unkind, and bad-tempered, and the amiability of temper and urbanity of manner which he had always displayed in society was a mere outside habili-ment, which, like his overcoat, he could lay aside whenever he entered his own door.

Willie really possessed considerable talent for drawing and painting, and coloured the prints his kind aunt had purchased for him, after a little practice, in the pages of his picture-books, in quite a creditable manner. Indeed, so much talent did he display for this pleasing art that finally his father was forced to acknowledge his son's ability, and after his education had been duly attended to he made painting his profession, and his studio became one of the most attractive of its kind in the city.

But among all its beautiful adornments an old, worn-out paint-box could be seen in a conspicuous situation, and when curious eyes were attracted to its incongruous appearance the only information which was afforded was not always satisfactory to his hearers.

"Only a relic of my childish days," he would say. "A token from a dearly loved aunt, whose encouragement helped me to become a painter."

THE best way to see Divine light is to put out your own candle.

DECORATING VASES.

THE glazed ware can only be decorated with mineral colours, and unless the use of the paints is thoroughly understood, the piece will prove, after firing, probably, only a disappointment. No such result need be anticipated in decorating the unglazed ware, for oil colours are used, and the glazing can also be done by the artist, as there are many kinds of varnish or glazes that can be applied without difficulty, and with excellent effects. Of shapes and sizes there is an endless variety, and the design should be in accordance with the vase which it is to decorate.

The vase must first be coated thoroughly inside and out with a solution of shellac. Several coats will be necessary to fill the pores of the ware, and each one must be thoroughly dry before putting on another.

A pair of tall, straight vases will be easy for the first attempt, and after they have been decorated fill them with long stemmed cat-tails and tall grasses, and stand them on the hearth at either side of the fire-place. They will prove very handsome ornaments.

The ground colour may be the same for both vases, Naples-yellow. Put the colour as smoothly as possible on the interior as well as the exterior. Let the first coat dry, and then apply a second. After this is dry and hard, trace the designs upon the vases, on one a spray of Virginia Creeper, with its rich autumn colouring of scarlet and crimson. Trail the vine as if it were falling over the top of the vase and clinging round the sides. The colours necessary will be vermilion and crimson-lake. On the other vase a blackberry vine with the berries will be pretty. Paint the leaves green and the berries black, with a little crimson lake, and here and there touches of white for the high light. When the painting is entirely finished stand the vases away from all dust to dry and harden. They will then be ready for glazing.

Copal varnish, or one of the many glazes which can be purchased all ready prepared, may be used for this purpose. Stand the vase in a warm place where it will be free from dust to dry, and if there is not a sufficient high polish apply another coat. Do not on any account handle them until they are perfectly dry, and this will require several days. Then when filled as directed with cat-tails and grasses, they will certainly be pleasant pictures for the eye to rest upon.

FAITHFUL BUT TYRANNICAL.

THE servant who has grown old in the family with which he has identified himself is peculiarly an English institution, and one which is not without its disadvantages.

When certain friends sympathized with the poet Rogers on the death of an old and attached servant, his master said, with somewhat less emotion than they expected, "The first seven years we were together he was a useful servant, the second seven years he was a faithful friend, and the last seven years he was an intolerable tyrant."

We could multiply indefinitely instances of this kind. Dean Ramsay tells us of a servant who was privileged to use the familiarity of an old friend. He had been so frequently censured for a certain fault, that his master at last lost patience. "John," said he, "you and I must part." "And whaur will you be gaun?" asked John. "I am sure ye'll no get any place like hame," not supposing it possible that he should go.

An old Scotch lady had a servant, whose great failing was an irresistible curiosity to become acquainted with the secrets of the family life, and to whom to carry a letter to its destination without in some way to become acquainted with its contents was a temptation too powerful to resist.

On one occasion his mistress called him. "Noo, Andrew," said she, "here's a letter I wish you to take at once, and that you may lose no time on the way, I'll even read it to you before I seal it up."

FACETIÆ.

A SOLDIER, writing to his girl, wound up his epistle as follows: "Heaven preserve you from you affectionate Frite."

WIFE (tearful): "You have broken the promise you made me!" Husband (kissing her): "Never mind, my dear, don't cry; I'll make you another."

THERE are said to be twenty-two different causes for headaches, which is about the number of popular alcoholic beverages. But, of course, there is no connection.

LITTLE Brother (bedtime): "Why don't you take your stockings off?" Little Sister (whose mother buys the cheap black kind): "I's dot all of 'em off 'at will come off."

SLIGHTLY PERSONAL.—Magistrate: "Describe the man whom you saw assaulting complainant." Policeman: "He was a little, insignificant looking cratur, about your size, your worship."

POLICEMAN (sternly): "What are you doing in the street at this hour of the night?" Prowler (joyfully): "By George, you're exactly the man I want to see. I'm trying to find a saloon."

"MAMMA, where's papa gone?" asked a little girl one day. "He's gone to town to earn more bread and butter for you, durling." "Oh, mamma, I wish he would sometimes earn buns!"

LADY (to hoyden whose hair ribbon is dragging in the sand): "Excuse me, my little maid, but your bow is trailing behind you." Hoyden (with-out turning her head): "Is he? Waal, he kin catch up ef he wants ter."

STAGE MANAGER: "Great Snakes! Stop! Don't move that scene yet." Super: "It's most time." Stage Manager: "Don't touch it. Juliet is there dead in the tomb. If you move that canvas it will let in a draft, and she'll sneeze."

"Why, John—you here? I thought you said if I would not accept your proposal you would drown yourself in the deepest part of the sea!" "Ah, Jane—did you think it such an easy matter to find the deepest part of the sea?"

WIFE (at the opera): "Mr. Blue Eyes, the tenor, didn't do that love scene well at all. Wonder if he's sick?" Husband: "Perhaps he is. The prima donna sat at the table next to ours at the hotel, and I noticed that she ate nine raw onions."

MR. HIBBED: "What do you suppose the bard referred referred to when he wrote the 'slipped pantaloons'?" Mrs. Slapdash: "Really, I have no idea." Young Hopeful: "I bet you I know!" Mr. Hibbed: "My son, you were not spoken to."

STRANGER: "Did a pedestrian pass this way a few minutes ago?" Granger: "No, ser. I've been right outer this tater patch for morn'n an' nower, an' notter blamed thing has passed 'cept one solitary man, an' he was trampin' erlong on foot."

MR. SLOWPAX (airily): "I wish to get measured for a suit of clothes, but it will be about three weeks before I can pay for them, as our pay day comes only once a month now. How soon can you have them done?" Tailor: "Um, let me see! In about three weeks."

DAUGHTER: "No, father, I cannot marry that man. He has red hair." Father: "But, my dear daughter, that objection doesn't amount to anything. Don't you notice that he is going quite bald, and in a short time he will not have a single red hair on his head?"

A MOVING PLAINT.—George: "Will you—?" Alice: "Oh, George, this is so sudden." George: "Not a bit of it. That hairpin of yours has been sticking into my shoulder for the last twenty minutes, and I can't stand it any longer. Will you please move a little?"

WEeping WIDOW: "You are sure, Mr. Bone-planter, that you will conduct everything in a satisfactory manner?" Eminent Undertaker: "Have no fear on that score, I beg of you, Mrs. Billhope. Of all the people I have buried in my long and successful career I am proud to say that not one ever raised the slightest objection to my work."

TUCKER: "I saw your son in the country to-day, Parker. He had a camera with him, I believe." Parker: "Yes, he went out to take some views, I suppose. Was he making good progress?" "You bet he was; and dust, too. Somebody's red bull was after him."

A GOOD REASON.—Teacher: "Tommy Slimson, how is it that your clothes are all torn and dirty?" (No answer). "Look at Bobby Smitten, how tidy he looks. Stand up, Bobbie, and tell the school why your clothes are not dirty, like Tommy Slimson's." Bobbie: "Cause I licked him."

THERE is a good deal of truth and philosophy in the remark made by a wit when he heard of the divorce of a couple recently married: "I am glad they married each other, for if they had each married somebody else there would have been two unfortunate couples instead of one."

TEACHER: "How do we tell if anything is sweet or sour?" Pupil: "By the sense of taste." Teacher: "And how do you distinguish colours?" Pupil: "By the sense of touch." Teacher: "You can't feel colours, can you?" Pupil: "Yes; don't you sometimes feel blue?"

"POT!" snouted a Michigan avenue grocer, "didn't I see you pocket an apple from that barrel?" Boy: "No, sir." Grocer: "Look out! You were acting very suspicious. I was watching you." Boy: "Yes, I knew you were, and that's the reason I didn't make a grab and run for it."

SHE: "I felt for the poor man who begged at the door this afternoon. My heart bled for him." He: "Just like you, darling. Did you relieve his distress?" She: "Yes; I couldn't help it." He: "What did you give him?" She: "I gave him that bad sixpence you intended to put into the plate next Sunday."

A SECRET WORTH KNOWING.—"Young man," said the long-haired passenger to the occupant of the seat ahead, "do you know that I've never spent a dollar for liquor in my whole life?" "Really?" responded the young man, turning half-way round with a look of great interest on his face. "How do you work it?"

MRS. STERNWIFE: "Yes, indeed, Miss Firstsummer, I know how exasperating it is to have one's affections trifled with. A young man attempted to trifle with my heart, but I tell you I got even with him." Miss Firstsummer: "You jilted him when he finally proposed, I presume?" Mrs. Sternwife: "No, I married him."

"DOESN'T it embarrass you to be kissed by your husband before a car full of people?" "Embarrass me?" replied the lady who was starting off on a journey, as she seated herself in a seat and looked at the questioner. "Did John kiss me when he said good-bye? I declare I didn't notice it. Is my hat on straight, Laura?"

WIFE (anxiously): "Tell me, doctor, is it anything serious? Will Mr. Gourmand come out of it all right?" Doctor (solemnly): "Yes, I think he will really. His pulse is high and his tongue looks badly, very badly, but—" Wife (tearfully): "O, doctor! It is not spinal meningitis, is it?" Doctor: "No; I think it is English plum-pudding!"

MRS. TESTY (looking up from the paper): "Isn't this strange? A certain gentleman after a fit of illness was absolutely unable to remember his wife, and did not believe she was the one he married." Mr. Testy: "Well, I dunno. It's pretty hard work sometimes for a man to realise that his wife is the same woman he once went crazy over."

"You have done splendidly with your elder daughters," said the plain-spoken visitor to the strong-minded mother; "Annie is likely to be head nurse at the hospital, Maud is certainly the brightest pupil at the normal school, and Eunice is certain to be a success on the stage. But I don't see what you are going to do with poor little Millie here—she looks so thin and sickly, and suffers so dreadfully with dyspepsia." "Oh, there is a career ahead for Millie," returned the mother as she passed her hand fondly through the thin, fair hair of her youngest daughter; "we think she is going to be a passionate poetess."

LAURA: "Now we are engaged, Ferd, dear, of course you will get me a nice ring." Ferdinand: "Oh—er—yes, of course, to be sure. I will try and get a diamond but if the jeweller should cheat me with a mere imitation, you will not blame me, will you, dear?" Laura: "Oh, you need have no fear on that score. I will go with you. They can't fool me."

MASTER: "Well, Susan, did you post my letter as I told you?" Faithful Servant: "Yes, sir; but I had it weighed first, and as it was double weight I put on another stamp." Master: "Good girl; but I hope you didn't put it on so as to obliterate the address." Faithful Servant: "Oh, no, indeed, sir; I just stuck it on top of the other stamp, so as to save room."

FIRST Old Lady: "Conductor, raise this window; I shall another to death!" Second Ditto: "Conductor, lower this window, or I'll freeze to death!" First O. L.: "Conductor, will you raise—"irate Passenger (interrupting): "Conductor, hoist that window and freeze one of those old women to death; then lower it and smother the other one. (Silence in the car.)"

ONE day a clergyman's wife, preparing to give a collation to her husband's association on the following Monday, and not being in the habit of doing extra work on Sunday, told her cook that she would better boil the ham for the sandwiches on Saturday, lest if boiled on Monday it might be too warm to slice. "W'y," drawled the cook, "Miss Wite, yer don't think it ud be wickid ter bile it on Sunday, do yer, ef we biled it slow!"

A GENERAL, on his return from the wars, showed his family a regimental flag all tattered and torn, and riddled with bullets, which he had captured from the enemy with his own hands. On the following morning the trophy was to be presented to the General Commanding-in-Chief. When he came to look for the flag his industrious housekeeper brought it to him, with a smile of proud satisfaction, and said: "I sat up all night and mended the flag. It now looks nearly as good as new."

THE conversation had been about children in general, and the mother told the following story about her own child, a little tot not more than three years of age: "The other night she was kneeling by my side and saying her prayer of 'now I lay me down to sleep.' She got as far as 'if I should die before I wake,' when she stopped, and being in a hurry to place her in bed, I said, 'well, go on; what comes next?' The little eyes were sparkling with earnestness and deep thought, and after having, apparently, settled the question in her own mind, she said in her baby way, 'a foonerall.'"

By observing as closely as possible the following "lets," the number of homes "to let" will be materially decreased:

- Let each allow the other to know something.
- Let each consider the other's feelings.
- Let each realise the fact that they are one.
- Let the husband frequent his home, not the club.
- Let his having "to see a man" wait till next day.
- Let his latchkey gather unto itself rust from misuse.
- Let him speak to his wife, not yell "Say!" at her.
- Let him be as courteous after marriage as before.
- Let him confide in his wife; their interests are equal.
- Let him assist her in beautifying the home.
- Let him appreciate her as his partner.
- Let her not worry him with petty troubles.
- Let her not narrate Mrs. Next Door's gossip.
- Let her not fret because Mrs. Neighbour has a sealskin.
- Let her make home more pleasant than the club.
- Let her dress as tastefully for him as for strangers.
- Let her sympathise with him in business cares.
- Let her home mean love and rest, not noise and strife.
- Let her meet him with a kiss, not a frown.

SOCIETY.

THE King of Siam has four of his sons in England receiving their education.

In Germany it has lately become the fashion for young women to go out as *masseuses*.

MILLE ROSA BONHEUR, who works as indefatigably as ever, is making some studies upon the Indians and animals of Buffalo Bill's troupe for a large painting that she intends to execute.

MADAME ALBANI sings every year before the Queen, who greatly admires her talent, besides having a very great personal regard for her. The Queen does not pay Madame Albani for singing, but has given her on each occasion some memento of her visit.

It is said that the Russian ladies of the present age are becoming frightfully addicted to the vice of gambling; and "plunge" to such an extent that whole fortunes are staked and lost in a single evening.

MR. GLADSTONE has made his tenants a present of a free library and reading-room. It is a neat little structure of corrugated iron lined with wood, with an ornamental spire surmounting the roof, and is in course of erection near the Grammar School at Hawarden.

At Dresden the Empress of Germany wore a clasp as an ornament, which is not only intrinsically beautiful, but of great historical value, for it was worn by Napoleon I. in his hat at Waterloo. A Prussian Hussar regiment seized it, and Frederic William III. bought it of the regiment. In time the Emperor William I. came to own it, and gave it to his Augusta to wear, and after the old Kaiser's death his widow restored it with several other valuable jewels to the Crown.

A MOST wonderful piece of brocade has been made for the Duchess of Fife in Bethnal-green. A few of the old silk looms still remain there, and on one of them this silk—which is said to be the finest ever made in England—was woven. The piece of thirty yards has cost, it is said, £120.

AN occupation for women—that of mending lace—is assuming sudden importance. The peasant cloaks of black and cream Chantilly lace which women have worn this summer are frail as they are beautiful, the airy draperies and wing-like sleeves requiring attention after every afternoon's promenade. The lace mender goes from door to door in America as regularly as the dressmaker, and much more frequently. She makes an art of darning, and charges such prices as are an artist's due.

THE present haphazard system under which mistresses give or withhold characters as they please is scarcely fair to the servants. A fit of ill-temper or indigestion on the part of a mistress may often saddle a girl with a character which will effectively keep her out of a place. In Germany every serving maid has a book in which her employer is bound to enter her length of service and certain other simple questions. This the girl sees, and can challenge any misstatement. The English servant cannot. Her character is given—and sometimes taken away—behind her back.

It is not often that Madame Sarah Bernhardt's fancies can be recommended as worthy of universal imitation, but she has certainly set a very wise example to widows, and, indeed, to all mourners, in her choice of mourning for her late husband. She was undoubtedly deeply attached to M. Damala, and has spared nothing to do honour and show respect to his memory, but she has sharply drawn the line at crape, which she pronounces villainous stuff, unworthy of the adoption of reasonable beings. Mme. Bernhardt has demonstrated in her own costumes the possibility of a widow's loss being adequately expressed without the use of this material, so perhaps she may yet be able to congratulate herself on having helped to abolish a very foolish, expensive and utterly useless custom, to which we have long been unwillingly bound by the fetters of conventionality.

STATISTICS

DURING August 178,075,702 gallons of water were supplied to London daily.

THE London morning papers contain about 10,000 advertisements every week.

It is now calculated that there are more than two hundred Christian religious sects in India.

In Canada, according to the census of 1881, the Catholics numbered 1,791,982; Methodists, 742,961; Presbyterians, 676,165; Church of England, 574,818; Baptists, 296,525; Lutherans, 46,350; Congregationalists, 26,900; Brethren, 8,831; Adventists, 7,211; Jews, 2,393.

AN American contemporary has discovered that the strength of paper is wonderful, and gives, as an illustration of this, the statement that a note of the Bank of England, twisted into a kind of rope, can suspend as much as 329 lbs. upon one end of it, and not be injured in the least.

GEMS.

THE more an idea is developed, the more concise becomes its expressions; the more a tree is pruned, the better is the fruit.

Nor only is it difficult to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.

If diamonds were always under our feet, we should soon cease picking them up; and if the prizes of life were to be had for the asking, the time would soon come when they would be no longer asked for.

THERE is nothing so elastic as the human mind. Like imprisoned steam, the more it is pressed the more it rises to resist the pressure. The more we are obliged to do, the more we are able to accomplish.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

To prevent tin from rusting, rub fresh lard over every part of the dish, then put in into a hot oven and heat it thoroughly. Thus treated, any tinware may be used in water constantly, and it will remain bright and free from dust.

RED onions are said to be an excellent diuretic, and the white ones are recommended to be eaten raw as a remedy for insomnia. They are a tonic and nutritious. A soup made from onions is regarded by the French as an excellent restorative in debility of the digestive organs.

CHEESE CANAPES.—Take two teaspoonsful of anchovy paste, a teaspoonful of mixed mustard, and a little pepper, work altogether with a lump of fresh butter. Place some good cheese in front of the fire till quite melted and toasted. Toast some bread, cover it well with the mixture prepared as above. Cut the bread into nice shapes with a pastry cutter, put the cheese on to the toast, and keep it well hot before the fire till quickly served. You may sprinkle some brown bread crumbs over the dish if you like.

CLARET JELLY.—Put 1½ oz. of gelatine to soak in a pint of water, add a little mace, nutmeg, a few cloves, the thinly peeled rind of two lemons, ½ lb. of castor sugar, and about a pint of good claret. When the gelatine has melted, add the strained juice of the two lemons, another pint of claret, and the whites and crushed shells of three eggs. Whisk it quickly on the fire till the jelly rises in the stewpan, leave off whisking, let it boil up, leave it for twenty minutes, and pass it through the jelly bag. About half a teaspoonful of carmine gives the jelly a much prettier colour. When it is quite clear, pour it into a mould which has been rinsed in water, put it on the ice, and leave it till it is ready to be turned out, which is done by dipping the mould in warm water.

MISCELLANEOUS.

WHOLE cloves are now used to exterminate the merciless and industrious moth. It is said they are more effectual as a destroying agent than either tobacco, camphor or cedar shavings.

CONSTANTINE, heir to the Greek throne, is in his twenty-second year. He is a very handsome young man, and has a most fascinating manner. He is extremely fond of military matters, but has devoted a great deal of time to the study of literature. He can read and speak English, French, German, Russian and Danish. His mind is very active, and he is more of a thinker than appearance would indicate. His habits are rather better than those of the majority of young men who hold anything approaching his rank in Europe.

ORIGINAL thought is not confined to the mental labourer alone. It enters into and improves all manual work. The farmer in the field, the porter with his burden, the mechanic with his tools, the woman busy with her needle or housework can all be original workers—that is, they can not only imitate what they have been taught, but also put fresh life into it, by thinking and by weaving their thoughts into their work, so as to do it better and more easily. People who do this rarely have to seek far or long for employment; their services are always in demand, and their advancement is assured.

THE philanthropist, while deserving all honour for his willingness to spend and work for the sake of his fellow-men, must have judgment to guide his efforts, or he will do them real harm in his efforts to do them good. If he gives indiscriminately of his substance to relieve present poverty until his means are exhausted, however kind may be his intention, he increases the evil in the future, and deprives himself of all power to render further aid. The man who cannot swim, and who rushes into the water to save the life of his friend, is truly self-sacrificing in spirit; nevertheless he may drag his friend down to a destruction which he might otherwise have escaped.

BRILLIANT DRESS FOR MEN.—Perhaps the time when man's love of colour will be gratified in his dress is nearer than we have imagined. French society gentlemen wear dress coats of gay colours, rivaling the ladies in costliness of attire, as of old. No one appears in black. Knee breeches are very generally worn in society. And now the edict has gone forth at the German Court, the most splendid at present in all Europe, that ordinary full dress shall be discarded at all Court festivities, and that gentlemen shall return to the laces, the silk stockings and the rich satins and velvets of Louis Fourteenth's time. The dozen or fifteen smaller Courts which take their tone from Germany are very likely to follow suit. This revival of the old masculine fashions may not be very lasting, but it is upon us.

NOISE OF THE STREETS.—No doubt a certain amount and quality of noise is inseparable from city life; but much of the nerve-wearing hue and cry might be modified or completely done away with. The yelling of steam whistles, the hiss of steam pipes, the rattle and clash of wheels on stone covered streets, the rumble of street cars, the clangor of bells, the howling of hucksters, keep up a condition in which a healthy nervous system of natural strength and sensitiveness is impossible. And there is not one of those agencies that is not suppressed more or less completely in most of the great cities. In Berlin, heavy waggons are not allowed on certain streets. In Paris any car load of rattling material must be fastened until it cannot rattle. Munich allows no bells on street cars. In Philadelphia church bells have been held a nuisance in certain neighbourhoods by judicial ruling. In nearly all the large cities of this country steam whistles are forbidden, and most of these noises in our advanced stage of civilization are utterly unnecessary. Clocks and watches are now so cheap and plentiful that steam whistles and bells to denote the time are useless. Why should not all useless noises, and nearly all are useless, be suppressed?

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

—O—

MUGGET MABEL.—We do not know the song.

DUNCAN.—Your question is incomprehensible.

B.—Palmer was executed on the 14th June, 1854.

MARY.—An ordinary marriage license costs £2 4s. 6d.

FLO.—The son being of age the father is not responsible.

DAISY.—You must settle such a silly little matter for yourself.

WARSPITE.—Lord Rothschild is a peer of the United Kingdom.

DAVID D.—A farmer who has only a gun license must not shoot game even on his own land.

BASIL.—There is no such degree, although, of course, a man may be M.A. of two universities.

PERCY.—A right of way is presumed by the law after twenty years' uninterrupted enjoyment.

UNEMPLOYED.—We have no knowledge what demand there may be in India for one of your trade.

QUITS.—An outgoing tenant must replace broken panes of glass and broken shutters and woodwork.

H. W. S. T. M.—We know of no book on the subject. Acting is an art that can hardly be learnt out of a book.

ROSALINDE.—It is strict etiquette to remove the glove, but it is not a matter of necessity; it is somewhat formal.

IAENE.—Certainly not; but it might be advisable under certain circumstances. In a large party, for instance.

ONE IN LOVE.—Not having the pleasure of the young gentleman's acquaintance, we cannot give any opinion on the subject.

IGNORANT.—At a social meeting or reception the following three topics should be avoided—dress, disease, and domestic affairs.

SYLVIA.—A Mizpah ring is not unlucky; it is intended to convey a much higher sentiment than the idea of "luck" would indicate.

DECOUM.—The length of a courtship can only be determined by the parties most concerned. Outsiders can have nothing to do with it.

J. GAITH.—The hall-mark is a lion passant accompanied by the distinguishing mark of the Assay Office in which the article has been tested.

PUG.—We should strongly advise you to leave your nose alone; any attempt to alter the shape of it will be sure to result in further disfigurement.

ELTON.—George Washington died the last hour of the day, the last day of the week, of the last month of the year, of the last year of the last century.

LEGATKE.—Two persons must attest the signature to a will, and they must not be interested in the will; otherwise their interest would be forfeited.

S. R.—Of all the actions of a man's life his marriage does least concern other people, yet of all actions of our life 'tis most meddled with by other people.

BABETTE.—The complexion can generally be guessed from the colour of the hair, because certain shades of hair always accompany certain complexions.

FAY.—What you ask depends so entirely on the colour and arrangement of your room that it is hardly possible to answer your question satisfactorily.

JUST OUT.—1. An apprentice's time closes at the end of the day's work on the last day of his indentures. 2. He is not entitled to half days in the last month.

R. B. D. B.—The School Board has no jurisdiction whatever in private adventure schools. They cannot compel you to do anything you do not wish to do.

F. M.—We suppose that the only real pleasure that can be felt by the collector of antique furniture is to realise how uncommodiously somebody else used to live.

VERA.—If you consult your prayer-book you will see that such a marriage is against the law; it is difficult to understand how any girl could contemplate such a union.

O. T.—For a copy of a will personal application must be made at the Probate Registry where the will is deposited. The cost of a copy depends on the length of the document.

A LOVER OF THEATRES.—No prudent girl would go to a theatre with a gentleman alone unless she was engaged to him, and then it would be more decorous to have a chaperone.

LORE.—The host at a dinner party should treat all his guests with impartial courtesy; it is very ill-bred to pay exclusive attention to a member of his own family when visitors are present.

HISTORY.—The White Tower, as it is called, was originally erected by William the Conqueror, whose son, William II., completed it; it was rebuilt by Charles I. in the year 1633.

MILES.—Sawdust is being used by some builders instead of sand. It is said to answer well, as it is one-half lighter than sand, and can be very advantageously used in ceilings. Mortar made of quicklime and sawdust, mixed with cement, does well for brick or stonework.

R. S.—It is illegal for a baker to sell bread over the counter without weighing it, and when delivering bread he must always carry a scale and weights in his cart.

TINA.—The gentleman would think, with reason, that the lady wished to decline his acquaintance for the future. The lady would be very rude, to say the least of it.

BADGER.—We think that a commercial traveller, in the absence of any agreement, if his salary is calculated by the year, is entitled by custom to three months' notice.

G. F.—If a boot manufacturer stamps an imitation Russia leather boot with the words "real Russia leather," he commits an offence under the Merchandise Marks Act.

LEARNER.—The letters "R. S. O." signify for postal purposes "Railway Sub Office"—that is, a sub office which receives its correspondence direct from a travelling post-office.

SOPHIA MARIA.—Mix the strongest soap lyes with quicklime to the consistence of cream and lay it on the marble for twenty-four hours. Clean it afterwards with soap and water.

A. F. T.—There is no rule in the matter; any one can give a lady away at her marriage. It seems hardly in good taste that her son should do so. An old friend of the family would be better.

TROUBLED BETSY.—Most satetons will wash, but it depends a great deal on the colours, and in any case would require great care. The safest plan would be to send your dress to a cleaner.

BLOSSOM.—A little common sense and a little less self-consciousness will no doubt cure you in time. Don't imagine that every one is thinking of you and your appearance, and you will soon forget to blush.

LOVE'S SWEET OFFICES

When sorrow hovers o'er the heart
And griefs upon it prey,
And all the peace and joy we know,
Like doves, have fled away,
Then smiles forsake the clouded face,
The cheek's sweet roses die,
And from the heart hot tears well up
To dim and sear the eye!

But now behold, when Love comes in,
How wonderful the change;
For what of evil shall resist
Its powers sweet and strange?
It takes possession of the heart,
Grief leaves the saddened face,
While happiness and cheerful hope
Succeed and fill the place.

For Love is gifted with the power
The troubled heart to soothe,
To soften all its ills and make
Its roughest pathway smooth!
It brings the smile back to the lip,
And to the cheek the rose,
And lights the eye with joys that beam
The brighter for its woes!

D. B.

FAIR FLORA.—No young lady would interfere with another's future husband. Any man who permits the sister of his betrothed wife to correspond with him is hardly to be depended upon.

MIRIAM.—Lashings grow on people; it begins in cobwebs and ends in iron chains. The more business a man has to do the more he is able to accomplish, for he learns to economize his time.

JOLLY JACK.—An ordinary amount of bodily strength will be enough for a lad wishing to go to sea, but he must have pluck and endurance as well, and a real liking for it to enable him to get on.

POOR ANN.—Taking up one's cross means simply that you are to go the road which you see to be the straight one, carrying whatever you find is given you to carry, as well and stoutly as you can.

ORANGE BLOSSOM.—The wedding breakfast is generally given at the bride's house. Circumstances might make it advisable to have it at the home of the bridegroom. There is no absolute rule on the subject.

A. O. T. A.—Strict attention to cleanliness is the only way to remedy the evil. Camphor rather aggravates the smell than checks it. The plentiful use of soap and water does more than anything else to allay it.

NANA.—Nothing but the address may be written on the address side of a post-card; on the other side one may write what he pleases, in any language he likes, in longhand or shorthand, or any symbols or cipher.

VIOLET.—It is not usual to shake hands on being introduced to a stranger; but it is difficult to lay down an exact rule. You must be guided by circumstances. It is not ill-bred to do it, but in most cases superfluous.

SUFFERER.—If one is troubled with insomnia, a bandage soaked in cold water and laid across the eyes and temples will afford almost immediate relief and guarantee rest to the weary person if he suffers no other ailment.

A DWARF.—If you have ceased growing you cannot make yourself taller; be contented with your allotted inches, and take comfort from the fact that some of the greatest people that ever lived have been small of stature; a gigantic mind may inhabit a pigmy body.

ONE IN DIFFICULTY.—There ought never to be any question of law between father and son. Yours appears to be a family disagreement, but if you are in any real difficulty about the matter you should apply to a solicitor.

DR. SMITH.—If you have sufficient grounds for so doing, you can apply to the justices to cancel your apprentice's indentures. Otherwise you are strictly bound by the conditions stated in the indentures as to wages, &c.

R. E. T.—Almost any acid will cure warts; the juice of a lemon rubbed on very frequently, as often as you think of it during the day, will remove them in time. Dry pipe clay rubbed in thoroughly is also said to be a certain cure.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—1. The landlord can at any time issue a distrain for all the rent overdue. 2. If you inquire at the Bankruptcy Office at the County Court they will give you all information as to the method of obtaining an administrative order.

O. A. I. W.—*In actorem male scepe recidit malum* means that a bad actor frequently encounters worse. We cannot say whether this is flattering or otherwise, for, as Captain Cuttle observes, "The bearing of this observation lays in the application on it."

A BROKEN HEART.—The young woman does not appear to be worth breaking your heart about; if you are a man you will forget all about her; there are plenty more in the world, and you may chance upon one who is more sincere in your next venture.

FORSAKEN.—The young man cannot be worth much thought, or he would declare himself openly. As it is, he appears to have carefully avoided saying anything that would be legally binding. Have nothing more to do with him unless he speaks out like an honest man.

ROVER.—One gallon of boiling water to two pounds of treacle; add half a pint of yeast, and cork down tightly in a cask. It will be ready for use in three days; if intended to keep longer, put in a small quantity of malt and hops, and when it leaves off working, cork it up tightly.

MINNIE.—If not engaged, and she wished to dance, she would say "she would be very happy," or would give the gentleman her programme to put his name on. If she wished to decline, she could say her programme was full, or that she was tired, and intended to sit out the dance.

ESTELLE.—It looks better for a hostess to rise to receive her guests, whether they are gentlemen or ladies. It looks very indifferent to shake hands seated, unless the gentlemen were such an old and intimate friend that he would feel rather honoured by the lack of ceremony.

T. S. B. O.—The lines

"Where ignorance is bliss
'Tis folly to be wise,"

were written by Thomas Gray, author of the celebrated "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," and they occur in a poem on a distant view of Eton College.

JUDITH.—Your best plan will be to advertise and watch the advertisements which appear in the daily papers. Your mistress cannot refuse to give you a character if she has kept you so many years in her service; the fact of your having remained so long with her is a character in itself.

GEORGE Y.—Merlin in the old romances was represented as the offspring of a damsel and a fiend; he was baptised by Blaise and so rescued from the fate of his father, and he became a wonderful necromancer. The legend tells how he imprudently communicated a potent charm to Vivien, who promptly employed it on him, and left him for ever spellbound in a hawthorn tree.

SCHOOLBOY.—The warriors of three centuries ago must have possessed extraordinary small frames. For Henry's armours, when seventeen years of age, would be very little too large for a tall boy of seven in those times. A connoisseur in armours once declared that in all his experience he had but rarely come across a suit of armour which would fit an ordinary figure now living.

UNHAPPY MARY.—It would not be advisable for you to undertake a voyage; it is probable that you would be allowed to do so if you applied. Yours is a very sad case, but you are young and have the world before you yet. Look it fairly in the face and do your best, and a way will be found for you. There is always an opening in the colonies for any one able and willing to work, and New South Wales is a rising country; you ought to be able to get on there, but very much depends on what sort of work you have been accustomed to at home.

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